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EXPLORING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE SUCCESS  
OF STRATEGIC CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION AT A  
TELCO COMPANY

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Administration

By

Tarun Inamdar

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## ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken at the headquarters of a telecommunications company, Telco Digital Wireless Mobile Landline (DWML) based in Northern Europe from 2016 to 2018. The company had experienced significant changes from 2010 through 2016. Changes were introduced based on market demands, and to improve productivity and performance. The changes transformed the organisations' structure, management layers and business operating model. The changes had a negative impact on the organisational environment. The purpose of this research project was to produce actionable knowledge and recommendations that were context-specific concerning the management and leadership of previous change management implementation practices through employees and managers perspectives. The study aimed to contribute to improving management practices for the success of future strategic change implementation in the company. The specific objectives of the research project were to 1. provide first-hand experiences of employees' perspective of the previous change efforts, the impact it had on them, and the beliefs they had regarding senior management effectiveness in implementing future change initiatives; 2. to develop actionable recommendations to improve the success of strategic change implementation for future change initiatives, and 3. which emerged after the presentation of actionable recommendations to senior managers and senior leaders, focused on the development of required leadership competencies, i.e. management qualities related to and required for managers to lead and manage change. The research project was grounded in an inside action research framework and used a phenomenological case study research methodology. There were nine semi-structured interviews with non-supervisory staff and three focus groups discussions with middle-managers. Four areas of improvement enfolded actionable recommendations were identified and presented in the first meeting of twelve with senior managers and senior leaders. The findings highlighted poor communication, a lack of participation and involvement, deficiencies in learning and development initiatives, and weak leadership from middle-management contributed to feeble strategic change implementation, previously. Recommendations included 1. to strengthen the management and leadership of changes at both a collective and individual level and to assign distinct leadership roles and functions to manage changes; 2. to develop an accountability framework to formalise functions and to provide support to ensure the successful performance of these functions; 3. to create leadership development and coaching programme; 4. to develop a corporate change strategy that translates the change vision to expected actions and provides much-needed guidance and clarity to employees and middle-management related to the change implementation process, and 5. to assign change champions among managers, to role model organisational values by managers, improve communication and increase engagement with staff members, to build workforce trust. Senior managers and senior leaders found the recommendations particularly relevant for future strategic change implementation. Agreed decisions and actions included 1. the integration of middle-managers into a wider management structure; 2. stakeholder analysis and grouping were conducted to decipher members to incorporate into a collective leadership structure with clear responsibilities, roles and accountabilities of managers in changes; 3. as part of the leadership development and coaching programme, leadership and behavioural competencies were developed and used by learning and development managers to coach managers on how to lead and manage change, and 4. internal and external parties were identified to formulate a future change strategy through ongoing consultation with non-supervisory staff and middle-managers. Also, there is a broader management and leadership recognition to provision strategic guidance and consistent collaboration through extensive backward and forward communication. This represented my contribution to improving strategic change implementation in the company and attempt to contribute to the gap in the change management literature surrounding change management implementation strategies that improve the success of change initiatives.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Action Research
CAQDAS	Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CMO	Change Management Office
CT	Communication Team
DWML	Digital Wireless Mobile Landline
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Director
LCF	Leadership Competency Framework
L&D	Learning and Development
OD	Organisational Development
TTD	Transformation & Transition Director
UoL	University of Liverpool

## **DEDICATIONS**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents. My father had emigrated from India in 1964 to the UK and my mother soon followed. My father was fortunate enough to obtain a scholarship to pursue a PhD at Glasgow University in Geophysics. Unfortunately, due to personal family reasons, he was unable to defend his thesis but remained an academic at heart throughout his professional working life. He was a true scholar-practitioner. My parent's stories motivated me throughout my journey. Their words of wisdom, support, academic understanding and life experiences inspired me. I undertook this journey to advance my scholarly and professional development and my parent's life stories was an integral part of that development too. I, therefore, wholeheartedly dedicate this thesis to my parents.

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Research Framework - Locating Leadership in Change Management .....	48
Figure 2: AR Cycles Construction, Planning Action, Taking Action and Evaluating Action .....	56
Figure 3: Change Framework Specific to Telco DWML .....	118
Figure 4: Conceptualising Leadership Competency Development .....	134

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Template of Change Implementation Improvement Areas .....	114
Table 2: Expected Functions of Middle-Managers in Future Telco DWML Changes.....	122

## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	1
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	2
<b>DEDICATIONS</b> .....	3
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	4
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	5
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	5
<b>Chapter 1: Context, Rationale and Purpose</b> .....	10
1.1 Introduction .....	10
1.2 Change Management Context at Telco DWML .....	11
1.3 Conceptual Context.....	13
1.4 Scholarly-Practitioner Context .....	14
1.5 Research Aim and Objectives .....	16
1.6 Thesis Structure .....	18
<b>Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework</b> .....	19
2.1 Introduction .....	19
2.2 Evolution of Change Management in Organisational Development .....	20
2.3 The Frameworks of Organisational Development .....	22
2.4 Transformation Change Definition .....	23
2.5 Common Themes in Transformational Change and Transformative Strategic Renewal .....	26
2.5.1 Participation and Involvement .....	27
2.5.2 Learning and Development .....	38
2.5.3 Leadership .....	41
2.5.4 Summary: Leadership That Matters.....	47
2.6 Summary and Transition .....	48
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	50
3.1 Introduction and Philosophical Framework .....	50
3.2 Action Research Rationalisation.....	51
3.3 The Inside Action Researcher Role .....	58
3.4 Research Methodology .....	59
3.5 Population and Sampling .....	61
3.6 Ethical Consideration.....	62

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3.7 Data Collection .....	65
3.7.1 Non-Participant Observations .....	65
3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interviews .....	67
3.7.3 Focus Group Discussions .....	67
3.7.4 Document Review .....	69
3.7.5 Member Checking and Data Saturation .....	69
3.8 Data Coding and Analysis .....	70
3.9 Action in Action Research .....	73
3.10 Summary and Transition .....	75
<b>Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis .....</b>	<b>76</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	76
4.2 Communication .....	76
4.2.1 Communication in Telco DWML Change Management .....	77
4.2.2 Messages .....	79
4.2.3 Pathway .....	80
4.2.4 Other Channels of Communication .....	82
4.3 Summary of Communication and Initial Recommendations .....	84
4.4 Participation and Involvement .....	85
4.4.1 Inclusion .....	86
4.4.2 Concerns: Employment Security .....	88
4.4.3 Lack of Trust in Management .....	90
4.4.4 Communication of Employee Concerns .....	91
4.4.5 Employee Resistance .....	92
4.4.6 Leadership Response to Staff Concerns .....	94
4.5 Summary of Participation and Initial Recommendations .....	96
4.6 Learning and Development .....	98
4.6.1 Organisation Learning Agenda .....	98
4.6.2 Management Training Development and Learning .....	99
4.6.3 Staff Training Development and Learning .....	99
4.7 Summary of Learning and Development and Initial Recommendations .....	102
4.8 Leadership .....	103
4.9 Taking Leadership of Telco DWML Changes .....	103

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4.9.1 Visionary Leadership .....	104
4.9.2 Strategic Leadership .....	105
4.9.3 Facilitative Leadership .....	107
4.9.4 Collective Leadership.....	109
4.10 Summary of Leadership and Initial Recommendations .....	111
4.11 Summary and Transition .....	112
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion and Actionable Recommendations .....</b>	<b>113</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	113
5.2 Areas for Change Implementation Improvement in Telco DWML .....	113
5.3 Telco DWML – Change Framework .....	117
5.4 Discussion of Actionable Recommendations .....	118
5.5 Leadership Function .....	119
5.5.1 Middle Management .....	120
5.5.2 Collective Leadership.....	125
5.6 Leadership Behaviour and Action .....	127
5.6.1 Change Strategy .....	128
5.6.2 Workforce Trust.....	130
5.7 Further Action Taken.....	132
5.8 Summary and Transition .....	137
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusions, Reflections and Self Reflections .....</b>	<b>139</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	139
6.2 Study Conclusions .....	139
6.3 Reflections of the Action Research Project.....	145
6.4 Reflections on the Study Process.....	147
6.5 Reflections on My Role as an Action-Researcher .....	151
6.6 Study Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study .....	153
<b>References.....</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>184</b>
Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Interview Questions .....	184
Appendix B: Non-participant observation worksheet .....	185
Appendix C: Journal Template .....	185
Appendix D: Authorisation from Telco DWML .....	186

Appendix E:	Individual Consent Form.....	187
Appendix F:	Participant Information Sheet.....	188
Appendix G:	Permission Request to Conduct Research on Premises .....	192
Appendix H:	Ethical Approval from University of Liverpool .....	193
Appendix I:	Code Template.....	194
Appendix J:	Leadership Competency Definition .....	195
Appendix K:	Leadership .....	196
Appendix L:	Leading Change.....	197
Appendix M:	Organisational and Strategic Perspective .....	198
Appendix N:	Winning Commitment .....	198
Appendix O:	Analysis and Decision-Making .....	199
Appendix P:	Creativity and Innovation.....	200
Appendix Q:	Delivering Results .....	200
Appendix R:	Behavioural Competency Design and Format.....	201
Appendix S:	Effective Communication .....	201
Appendix T:	Team and Collaborative Working.....	202
Appendix U:	Change, Adaptability and Flexibility.....	202
Appendix V:	Focus Group Discussion Questions .....	203
Appendix W:	Actionable Recommendations and Actions Taken to Improve Strategic Change Implementation at Telco DWML.....	204

## **Chapter 1: Context, Rationale and Purpose**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Many organisations are confronted with unprecedented challenges, related to Covid-19, Brexit, trade wars, climate change, merger and acquisitions and challenges centred on technology. In extension, industries are encountering pressure from disruptors, subsequently finding themselves needing to change to survive. This, in turn, is placing pressure on the organisation bottom line and increasingly generating uncertainty with leadership community members and employees. To combat such issues, organisations are developing strategies. Types of strategies include transformation, restructuring and/or significant IT investments. Despite the time taken to develop such strategies, the one consistent question that arises is, how to best implement change.

The purpose of this research project was to produce actionable knowledge and recommendations that were context-specific concerning the management and leadership of previous change management implementation practices through employees and managers perspectives to improve the success of future strategic change implementation at Telco Digital Wireless Mobile Landline (DWML). The researched organisation is the largest national telecommunications company in the country in which it operates in Northern Europe. The research was conducted in Telco DWML's Head Office. Since 2010, the company has been going through significant changes. The changes had a considerable impact on the company, its management, employees, structure, resources and its operations.

The origins of Telco DWML can be traced to its former state-owned monopoly telecommunications provider, established in 1983 before it became privatised in 1999 through a floatation on the local and New York Stock Exchanges. Telco DWML also has minor overseas operations, the focus of which is on corporate and business telecom markets in neighbouring countries. Telco DWML operates a wholesale fixed-line network. It also provides fibre and copper-based access products to a broad range of local telecommunications companies. Due to the national competition in the telecommunications industry, Telco DWML enhanced its portfolio of product and service offerings beyond that of landline service. It wanted to expand its portfolio to include Digital TV, Broadband and Mobile services.

Since the company has become privatised, it has invested close to €125 million in technology-based programmes and projects to develop the infrastructure to facilitate the expansion of its portfolio. In Q3 2018, Telco DWML accounted for 40% of the fixed voice market retail revenue. It accounted for 45% for wholesale and fixed-line retails revenue and 20% of the mobile market with a total of 16% of total subscriptions. The company had 32% of fixed broadband subscriptions and 43% of fibre optic subscriptions.

## 1.2 Change Management Context at Telco DWML

Telco DWML operates in the telecommunications sector. There have been numerous change initiatives at different levels within many telecommunication companies (Garber, 2013). Organisational change in the telecommunications sector is frequent and necessary for companies to survive (Tang and Gao, 2012). Due to technology advancements and the influx of competition into the sector, many telecommunication companies have responded by introducing new products and services (Garber, 2013; Tang and Gao, 2012).

An independent evaluation of Telco DWML was conducted in 2009 and concluded that ‘...there are many challenges ahead. If Telco DWML is to meet these challenges, they will have to engage in greater, wider changes with a new model to operate. Specifically, Telco DWML will have to revamp its management processes and actively carry out a new human resource (HR) policy.’ (Telco DWML, 2009, p.3). The conclusion initiated a new phase for the company, a phase for organisational changes. Some changes began in 2010, specifically change in Telco DWML’s business and operating model, and the adoption of new business functions related to overlooking the company’s investments. In 2011, the CEO initiated significant changes. The CEO had a vision for transformational changes that encapsulated a fresh start and a new beginning to improve the company’s performance and image.

The Global Financial Crisis in 2008-2009 had a significant impact on the overall development and roll-out of changes in 2011. After the financial crisis, Telco DWML had experienced fierce pressure from the external environment. The implication was that the organisation needed to widen its portfolio of products and services and consequently needed to deepen the ongoing changes and also to broaden the scope further to facilitate further changes to keep up with its competitors. External consultancy agencies were brought in to partner and support changes. The decisions on selecting the right strategy for change at that time was mostly dependent on Telco DWMLs’ existing effectiveness and efficiency to deliver results. It pressured the company to demonstrate its ability to deliver results on the floor.

It had a negative impact on the environment in Telco DWML. One of the root causes of a bleak organisational environment was the neglect employees felt from management, which resulted in reduced performance and productivity. There was no response by management and leaders to this internal crisis which placed more pressure on Telco DWML. Management was primarily focused on supporting the change mandate, which centred on investments and services. This, in turn, put pressure on the company to deliver more and better results on the floor to assist production. Due to the high pressured environment and what was deemed as unrealistic delivery expectations from the employees’ perspective, employee morale was negatively impacted. In that time, many key employees left the company also.

The combination of these events meant that Telco DWML had a more critical requirement to deliver more and better results with a reduced workforce. The company had a restrained capacity to counter the pressures. It had to find paths to introduce new ways to do business, how best to use the existing workforce and resources more efficiently, and to introduce lean processes and streamline structures. During the streamlining of structures and making processes more efficient, many employees were shifted from one team to another and different functional units within existing or new departments. This added to the frustration, anxiety and lowering of morale of existing staff members.

While the pressure for changes was influenced by the external environment, as time went on, it directly impacted the internal environment posing significant challenges. The results of the staff survey in 2011 highlighted the internal problems. 75% of staff members had a real concern with the introduction of changes by management. 62% of staff members did not have any incentive to increase efficiency and productivity and did not see the tools and approaches in place to make it achievable. 56% of employees had concerns with management concerning existing HR procedures and policies. According to Pablo *et al.* (2007), change success based on the forces of the external environment is mainly dependent on the internal structures and resources, and an organisations ability to reconfigure competencies and processes. Introducing change in such an environment, as it was in the case of Telco DWML, creates high levels of dissatisfaction among the workforce (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999). It, in turn, bolsters frustration and decreases workforce commitment (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999). Therefore, in the context of Telco DWML, for management to introduce changes in such an internal environment could put the success of change implementation at risk.

Pressured by both external and internal factors, Telco DWML's senior leaders introduced and began to implement a change agenda in 2011 targeted at transforming the company to be more productive, efficient and agile. Within this change agenda were initiatives related to the business model; and strategic HR workforce planning. The expectation was that the change agenda would renew and revive the organisation and meet the challenges of its competitors and customer demands, thus ensuring Telco DWML's long-term sustainability. In addition to the initiatives, the aim was also to focus on staff issues raised in the 2011 survey and increase motivation and engagement, so that Telco DWML could increase delivery with better results.

Almost five years after the introduction and implementation of the change agenda, a new CEO was appointed in 2016. Another staff survey followed in 2017 to assess Telco DWML's performance and effectiveness. The results acknowledged a strong focus for results and some improvements in HR management policies and practices introduced in recent years. However, there was still a deficiency in the

transparency of performance-based resource allocation systems. Similarly, the survey results indicated a lack of efficiency improvements and generally, not too much positive progress was demonstrated since the initiation of the change agenda. 72% of staff members did not regard Telco DWML as an efficient workplace. 74% of staff members did not feel engaged. 63% did not trust Telco DWML's management style and did not support the changes that were introduced by management. Almost 50% of employees believed there were still no incentives put in place to increase efficiency and therefore affecting the quality of service.

The lack of improvement in operational effectiveness and workforce engagement were interim results as changes were in the midst of implementation. However, senior leaders were concerned about the lack of progress and expected results to be improved. For example, only 30% of staff members considered that the existing procedures and policies were efficient. When comparing the results to other organisations within the same industry, geographical region and in that given timeframe, it suggested that Telco DWML were not the only organisation struggling to implement strategic changes.

### 1.3 Conceptual Context

The change management literature considers change as a natural process that includes people and their organisations. Many researchers believe change is a natural phenomenon that takes place in every aspect of human life and is implanted in human action (Zare *et al.*, 2015; Feldman, 2000; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). The definition of organisational change provided by Van de Ven and Poole states it as 'a difference in form, quality, or state overtime in an organizational entity' (p.512). In essence, the researchers apprise us that change is part of a healthy organisational life. However, how an organisation and its employees respond to the associated challenges necessitates the examination to understand better the challenges and opportunities derived by such changes (Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2014).

In today's world, many organisations are affected by external environments. These include financial and economic fluctuations, social and political reforms, climate change, and rapid technological developments. Such volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity impacts organisations irrespective of their industry or sector (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Zaccaro and Banks, 2004; Zare *et al.*, 2015). In such context, for organisations to survive, grow and succeed is dependent on an organisation's capacity to adapt to the external forces through the introduction of changes within its internal environment (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Zare *et al.*, 2015). The biggest challenge, when confronted with a turbulent environment, is to predict and control the outcome of organisational change as it unfolds in ways different from how one may have expected (Burke, 2009). Other scholars view the challenge differently. A contrasting perspective focuses the challenge on how to run two processes in parallel concurrently:

exploiting and organisations existing strength, for example, lines of business that are already profitable, while introducing changes and exploring new ways of conducting business, that would prove comparatively advantageous for the organisation in the future (Balogun *et al.*, 2014).

In essence, due to economic trends and fluctuations in the market, there is a demand for leaders to be change-oriented (Lamprinakos, 2015). Specifically, how change is managed and adopted in the telecommunications sector is critical to survival (Kanter, 2001). Telecommunication companies have evolved beyond providing just a landline service. Consumer demands and technological advancements in this sector have meant that leaders in this industry have to enhance and increase their products and services to remain competitive (Garber, 2013; Tang and Gao, 2012).

The telecommunications industry is a fast-changing marketplace (Tang and Gao, 2012). Taking the time to develop sound management strategies to help implement change can help sustain competitiveness (Tortorella and Fogliatto, 2014). Frail strategies that diminish front-line employee buy-in during organisational change initiatives are a principal concern and reason for fruitless improvements (Fuchs and Prouska, 2014; Helper and Henderson, 2014). If managers engage in futile management strategies, it can lead to a decline in human capital, employee resistance towards change, reduced productivity and performance, and ultimately a failed change effort (Helper and Henderson, 2014). Managing to get employees on board for change can shape the success rate of an initiative (Harris *et al.*, 2014). In this light, the management approach regarding how to stimulate and inspire the frontline workforce to change is essential in managing resistance (Greve, 2013; Russ, 2013a; Russ 2013b). Managing employee resistance during organisational change necessitates having effective change management practices and processes in place (Jansson, 2013; Piderit, 2000). Gaining employee buy-in through leadership communication can help improve employee responses to change (Kotter and Schilesinger, 2008). Management behaviour and practices during organisational change should be clear and consistent to enhance employee perception and positively shift employee attitudes related to change (O'Neill, 2012).

In this capacity, change needs to be understood as both a continuous process and a strategic priority to respond to the ever-changing landscape and overall environment. To do this requires the exploration of different types of changes that may apply to Telco DWML and ascertain the processes relevant to the changing organisational context.

#### 1.4 Scholarly-Practitioner Context

As for many people, I found change is something that is part of my life. My professional career had me move from company to company for almost 15 years. During those moves, my roles steadily increased

with responsibilities. It was when I was a project manager for some years that I realised the importance of people and how they are critical to delivery. Without having people onboard, tasks and activities become tedious. The type of work that I was doing, which was in the professional services arena, meant I had to understand people, processes, procedure and change. Unfortunately, due to the financial crisis in 2008/2009, I was made redundant in 2010. My career to that point, coupled with my job loss, inspired me to pursue a Master's Degree in Management Consultancy, with a change management focus. Upon completion, I assessed my opportunities. I wanted to move into roles that would help me to progress in my career, that had a change management focus. I did achieve this, and fortunately, I worked in the capacity as both an internal and external change management consultant for some years. Eventually, I began to work as a change management consultant as a permanent staff member in the researched organisation. As time went on and as responsibilities increased within this domain, I was appointed as a Business Change Manager. I realised the need to enhance my understanding of organisational development practices further and to improve my management skills. It was in this capacity that I selected the DBA programme at the University of Liverpool (UoL). The course offered me the opportunity to hone in on my management skills, learn about modern management practices and approaches. As a practitioner, it was pivotal for me to learn new knowledge related to and that I could apply to the workplace. This was also made feasible, as the DBA programme in UoL permitted the combination of full-time employment in the researched organisation with the studies.

My role in Telco DWML was that of a Business Change Manager in their headquarters based in Northern Europe. I was working in what was then the transformation office. My managerial tasks related to managing different change management workstreams, designing change plans to ensure effective and efficient implementation, and that the implementation of plans had an overall positive impact that was in keeping with the broader transformation programme.

During the time of my DBA studies, I was introduced to the concept of scholar-practitioner (Tenkasi and Hay, 2004). The scholar-practitioner bridges the theory and practice divide and contributes to both the academic and organisation environment. During the learning sets, I contributed my professional experiences and introduced new knowledge on management practices to Telco DWML. The thesis represents the concluding stage of my almost seven-year DBA course journey.

The next step upon the completion of modules and residencies was to select a topic for the thesis. My interests were in transformation and change management, and my role was linked to this also. I approached the Transformation and Transition Director (TTD). I presented the opportunity the thesis could bring to Telco DWML by addressing a real management issue and how it could generate context-



specific knowledge to help address the issue. We met and discussed the potential research opportunity with the Human Resource Director (HRD) in the context of issues currently faced by management in Telco DWML to identify the areas that could be addressed by the research project. During our discussion, I shared the topics of the modules in the DBA programme that were also linked to many aspects of transformation and change management. I also shared the purpose of the thesis project. I reiterated my interest in transformation and change management, which could be the core of the thesis as I considered it relevant to Telco DWML's ongoing issues that management are potentially faced with. Both the TTD and HRD warmed to the idea and shared their ideas for the research project. Both the TTD and HRD underscored that the research project should allow understanding the change context within Telco DWML better. The HRD reinforced that the organisation was going through and experienced many changes. From this perspective, the TTD mentioned that there was much knowledge already generated related to the type of changes that were introduced. However, according to the TTD and HRD, what was not well known was how previous change efforts were managed and led, and the impact the decision and actions that were made by management had on staff members and if and how Telco DWML may improve it. The HRD reemphasised that the company will be embarking on future change initiatives. In that light, both the TTD and HRD mentioned that the knowledge generated by this research project could be beneficial to improve change implementation and increase the success of changes. During this meeting, the TTD and HRD agreed and recommended the department in which the research could be conducted. Equipped with this knowledge, I was then able to develop the concept and scope of the thesis. It was agreed with the TTD and HRD, who were keen to learn and thought it could be instrumental in examining management and leadership decisions and actions during previous change efforts from the perspective of its employees and managers using an action research methodology to generate knowledge from staff and middle-management lived experiences of the previous change initiative to improve change implementation in the future. We also discussed and agreed upon the action component of the project from the outset with a continuous dialogue with senior managers and senior leaders on the research itself, but critically on the initial and final findings, and recommendations.

### 1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

Telco DWML had experienced significant changes when this research project was initiated. Senior leaders also recognised that changes would have to continue to meet external environment demands and to enhance productivity and performance further. This was in keeping with the academic literature; in that change is a natural ongoing process that is adjunct to modern organisations (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). With past change efforts, Telco DWML did not witness the success it envisaged. Senior leaders realised

that previous change implementation efforts did not go as smoothly as the company would have liked and that there were different views on what went well, what could be improved and how these changes were managed and led. These observations were also issues that were raised and confirmed in the staff surveys in 2011 and 2017, with particular focus and relevance to management practices.

Taking the senior leader's intention into consideration with the continuance of organisational changes through the introduction of strategic improvements, the TTD and HRD labelled the need to analyse how previous change efforts at Telco DWML were managed and led, and accordingly draw lesson and recommendation to improve the management and leadership of change implementation. Bearing this in mind, this study aimed to contribute to improving management practices in the company by generating knowledge that was organisation-specific on the management and leadership of Telco DWML changes. The specific objectives that the research project planned to address were to 1. provide first-hand experiences of employees' perspective of the previous change efforts, the impact it had on them, and the beliefs they had regarding senior management effectiveness in implementing future change initiatives; 2. to develop actionable recommendations to improve change management implementation for future change initiatives and 3. which emerged after the presentation of actionable recommendations to senior managers and senior leaders, focused on the development of required leadership competencies, i.e. management qualities related to and required for managers to lead and manage change.

For the study, I reviewed and assessed the previous change initiatives at Telco DWML that were implemented between 2010-2016. In the context of this initiative, I examined and documented management and leadership decisions and actions embedded in the changes. Specifically, I concentrated on the following questions: i. what were the specific management and leadership roles and functions during the previous changes; ii. in what way did these roles and functions impact change success; iii. was there anything Telco DWML could learn based on the implementation of such practices and iv. are there any recommendations to improve future change implementation at Telco DWML. I embarked on the study in close consultation with Telco DWML management. The study was approved in line with existing protocols and procedure in the company (see Appendix D).

The expected outcome of the study was specific, actionable recommendations that fitted the context of Telco DWML to improve change management practices in the organisations. The findings of the study were shared with senior management and senior leaders for validation and to create an awareness related to them about management and leadership practices to improve the future success of change implementation.

## 1.6 Thesis Structure

There are six chapters in this thesis. In chapter 1, I have provided a contextual framework for the study. The chapter also presents the study purpose, aims and objectives. It is followed by chapter 2 which comprises the academic literature and aims to develop a theoretical understanding of leadership role and function in change management. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology. It provided insight into the organisational context and the management and leadership of previous change implementation practices in Telco DWML. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the presentation and analysis of collected data. Chapter 5 presents the discussion of findings and actionable recommendations. This chapter is of particular importance as it also includes agreed decisions for action made by senior managers and senior leaders to improve change implementation. The agreed decisions and actions were undertaken based on the presentation of actionable recommendations during the study. The agreed decisions and actions would not have occurred without the formulation of actionable recommendations, derived from the academic literature and analysed participant data. Among those agreed decisions and actions was an integration of middle-managers into a broader management structure to provide them with the visibility of ongoing projects, stakeholder analysis and grouping to decipher members to incorporate into a collective leadership structure, and actions towards the development of leadership development and coaching programme with associated leadership and behavioural competencies to coach managers on how to lead and manage change. Finally, both internal and external parties were identified for the formulation of a future change strategy and weekly consultations with relevant non-supervisory staff and middle-managers to help in the preparation is formalised. Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, presents the study conclusions, reflections and limitations of the study. The report ends with a list of references and appendices that support the thesis.

## Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 Introduction

The literature suggests that change management is a charter to manage execution and support adjustments to business structures, culture alterations, new organisation processes, downsizing, and mergers and acquisitions (Pangarkar, 2015). Wiley (2012) asserts that change management is a methodical process that entails the management of people, process, infrastructure and equipment that are impacted by a change. Battilana and Casciaro (2012) and Kuhn (2012) explain that effective management necessitates having to clarify and describe the change to stakeholders concerning how it will be implemented and the impact the change is going to have at different levels of the organisation. The literature in change management also informs us that approximately 70 per cent of change efforts fail (Vakola, 2013).

The challenges associated with organisation change design and implementation, and managing individual change is well examined (Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis, 2011). However, there is a deficiency in the change management literature surrounding change management implementation strategies that improve the success of change initiatives (Day *et al.*, 2014). It is suggested that embedding the individual themes and associated influencing factors highlighted in the change management literature coupled with an understanding of the leadership roles and functions required within those themes when designing and implementing change, can help change strategy designers to positively improve future change implementation and increase change success at Telco DWML.

Chapter one mentioned that Telco DWML recently went through significant changes. The type of changes could be classified as strategic according to Agarwal and Helfat (2009) as the changes were concomitant to the organisation's vision and impact its failure or success. Burgelman (1991) informs us that strategic change is a broad classification with many forms of changes. Within the various types of strategic change, there are specific conceptual frameworks relating to the success of an organisation. These include strategic renewal (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009) and transformational change (Chapman, 2002). Such strategic changes primarily focus on intentional action in response to an organisation facing a crisis requiring more than incremental change (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009) coupled with the objective to safeguard an organisations' survival and set the groundwork to analyse change management within the organisation.

I initiated the research project with the academic review. The reason for this was to gain a better conceptual and contextual understanding of the leadership roles and practices in strategic change management implementation. To begin, the literature broadly starts with an overview of the evolution of

change management on organisational development (OD). After I analysed two forms of strategic change, strategic renewal and transformation, the literature review then focuses on strategic transformation change as it contextually fits the research organisation. However, both sets of strategic changes are continuously compared and contrasted as prior analysis allowed the identification of common themes and factors within those themes to strategic changes that notably impact and influence the design and management of strategic change implementation.

The analysis and identification of common themes and factors sharpened the focus on how leadership practices influence those common themes and influencing factors in strategic change management design and implementation. I then collated these common themes and influencing factors in a research framework, that serve as the foundation for the study. I then present and discuss a leadership framework to improve change implementation that guided the research project in the final section of the chapter.

## 2.2 Evolution of Change Management in Organisational Development

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535 BC – 475 BC) said ‘Change is the only constant in life’. Today more than ever, this is visible. Van de Ven and Sun (2011) mention that change has become a vital aspect of organisational life. The ongoing injection of digital technological transformation in many organisations is changing the current business landscape into a vibrant digital ecosystem (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2013; Kane, 2016; Pagani, 2013). Business firms recognise that to remain competitive in the market place, they must embrace rapid and value-added strategic change (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2013; Rometty, 2016; Weill and Woerner, 2015).

From the 1960s, the very foundation of OD mainly focused on constructing knowledge and upholding modest incremental changes (Chapman, 2002). The discourse during that time principally focused on stability, and little attention was given to transformational change (Orlikowski, 1996). In this context, change was viewed from an objective lens, whereby it was planned, had a top-down approach and with the expected outcome of changes to serve an organisations future stability (Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis, 2005). Over time, the scope of change evolved, as did scholar and practitioner understanding of change. During this time, OD began to pay further attention to large-scale strategic changes (Chapman, 2002). In time, there were two schools of thought surrounding the change management concept that evolved that affected the manner change was understood which in turn affected the theoretical differences among the various types (Chapman, 2002).

The conventional school of thought consisted of scholars such as Lewin (1947), Burke Litwin (1992) and Vollman (1996), according to Armenakis and Bedeian (1999). The conventional change concept school

represented and viewed change from a traditionalist perspective whereby change was deemed to be a short-lived episodic process with a beginning and end. The scholars did not view change as a natural process, but rather as an exceptional process favouring routine, stability and order (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). At its core, this school of thought adopts Lewin's three-step change model (1947) of changing organisations and people, unfreeze, move, refreeze. It is a template used for many modern change programs (Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis, 2005). However, there are many critics of the model who referred to it as static, simplistic, outdated and too rigid to accommodate today's world and associated complexity (Kanter, Stein and Jicks, 1992, Benson, 2015; Cummings, Bridgman and Brown, 2016). Some have also mentioned that the Lewin model is missing the critical component of sustaining change, bringing balance and stability to a situation (Van de Ven and Sun, 2011). Conclusions made by Beer and Nohria (2000) and Taylor (1993) suggest that the traditional approach to change rarely produce actual change.

In contrast to the traditional approach to change, the contemporary perspective is that change is emergent and ongoing with a change programme continuously enacted and adjusted by organisational actors (Orlikowski, 1996). This modern perspective embraces the evolution of continuous human action and is therefore considered evolutionary, natural and an ongoing process concerning and linking everything in the world (Ford and Ford, 1995; Orlikowski, 1996; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Weick and Quinn, 1999). According to Tsoukas and Chia (2002), successful change in organisations is dependent on how its actors make sense of the context and the extent to which they continuously collaborate in action rather than approaching and viewing change as episodic events. There is a recognition surrounding the amalgamation of the complexity of organisational environments with frequent changes, the vast amount of change models implemented in parallel, agents of change bringing their conceptual perspective of change, and how it leads to confusion and the downfall of change implementation (Van de Ven Poole (1995). This perspective of change is complicated; however, there are strides made to shift the accustomed organisational change concept to 'organisational becoming' that effectively repudiates change models to be utilised statically and rigidly and to incorporate a human element through the use of sense-making and intuition to steer continuous change Tsoukas and Chai (2002).

Within this school of thought, the variety of conceptual understanding is varied and extensive, ranging from micro routine shifts to the point where the change can be invisible and unintentional to full large-scale changes. In the context of this research project, I adopted a synoptic account within the modern school of change (Tsoukas and Chai, 2002; Greiner and Bhambri, 1989). Within synoptic accounts, change is viewed as distinct events achieved with a given change events' features, causal antecedents and

consequences (Tsoukas and Chai, 2002). The synoptic perspective differs from the traditional perspective in that it recognises the constant process of change and appreciates a given change event as part of a course towards a firm's stability and as a component related to the movement of various changes influenced by internal and external factors Tsoukas and Chai (2002). The benefit of the synoptic perspective is that it permits procuring a snapshot of a situation to examine and describe it and at the same time there is a recognition that the change event is one component of an entire ongoing process Tsoukas and Chai (2002).

### 2.3 The Frameworks of Organisational Development

The various conceptual understandings of change energised the construction of many OD frameworks in the literature (Golembiewski, Billingsley and Yeager, 1976; Isabella, 1990; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Weick and Quinn, 1999). Golembiewski, Billingsley and Yeager (1976) developed alpha, beta and gamma change model types. The former two types of change model represent behavioural change within fixed and existing organisational boundaries, and the latter represents a change that led to redefining an entire space or a 'big bang' type of change (Golembiewski, Billingsley and Yeager, 1976, p.38). Change of this nature modifies the general understanding of organisation operations and purpose (Chapman, 2002). Almost at the same time, there was an emergence of two other types of change, first and second-order change (Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch, 1974). First-order change is similar to alpha and beta change in that it entails adjustments in a system. Second-order change is similar to gamma change entailing adjustments qualitatively to a system. With time, various OD scholars added to and illuminated this framework. Bartunek and Moch (1987) expounded that first-order change entails gradual modification within the existing framework. Levy (1986) added that first-order change encompasses incremental adjustment without changing the foundation of the system.

Bartunek and Moch (1987) further elaborated that second-order change required altering an organisational system. Ford and Backoff (1988) mentioned that it meant shifting to a different state of understanding and moving from one structure to another. Chapman (2002) concluded that second-order change was commonly defined as 'transformation' during the analysis of different changes. Beckhard (1992) explained that this definition represents organisations to re-define their structures and forms and re-evaluate their needs and appearance.

Based on the above conceptual models presented, transformational change belongs in the category of gamma or second-order change and involves profound qualitative shifts in organisational systems that affect the nature of an organisation, how it interacts with the internal and external environment, and affects how an organisation is shaped (Chapman, 2002; Beckhard, 1992). Tsoukas and Chia (2002)

present a synoptic perspective of change that allows the exploration of a specific change event within the process of ongoing changes. Concerning transformational change, it is a radical systemic and strategic change. Analysing such changes permits the examination of common processes that might be apparent in that type of change.

## 2.4 Transformation Change Definition

The early OD literature viewed the concept of transformational change through a traditional lens in that it was piece-meal, gradual change (McNulty and Ferlie, 2002). As from the 1980s scholarly attention focused in the direction of large-scale and synoptic changes. Specific attention and discourse centred on defining differences and comparisons of this type of change with other types of changes (Bartunek and Moch, 1987; Chapman, 2002; Golembiewski, Billingsley and Yeager, 1976). After this, the topic shifted to the framework of behavioural science. What emerged from this scholarly analysis was that it is difficult to implement large-scale changes unless people change first (Chapman, 2002). Behavioural change was first presented by Argyris (1964) and referred to it as personal changes in beliefs and values of leadership community members and the development of decision-making before undertaking any change initiative. Extending on this discussion, other OD scholars concluded that in transformational change, employee attitudes and values should change first and that it would build the foundation for future changes in an organisations systems and structures (Bartunek, 1988; Chapman, 2002; Golembiewski, Billingsley and Yeager, 1976). The premise in which this conclusion was made, as explained by Argyris (1974) is that employees, overtime experience less motivation, tend to be cautious with taking risks or attempting innovations. Unless they change, enhance their interest, be open to innovations and ideas, to achieve success in major change is difficult. Such insight influenced the discussion on transformational change. The discussion incorporated the softer elements of change, such as employee values, behaviour and attitude, and organisational culture, and began to move away from the harder elements, such as structures and systems within an organisation (Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015; Muja *et al.*, 2014). Golembiewski, Billingsley and Yeager (1976) defined behavioural and value change as a shift in one's psychological space. Levy and Merrys' (1986) definition of behavioural change was a paradigmatic shift within transformational change. The new understanding and appreciation of change elements became the central distinguishing component for transformational change from other types of change (Chapman, 2002; Golembiewski, Billingsley and Yeager, 1976).

There was a shift in the transformational change discourse in the 1990s with a focus on results, its effects, and defining it in the context of revolutionary, rebirth, remaking and radical shifts (Kotter, 1995; Limerick, 1994; Richan, 1991). The humanistic and people-centric approach to transformation was still



maintained, but the focus was on outcomes and change benefits (Limerick, 1994). During this time, various other conceptual frameworks were developed. The reason for the development of these conceptual frameworks was to provide and enhance clarity on certain change events or processes that lead to the transformational effect of change. Four types of transformational change were developed by Beckhard (1992), of which one centred on cultural changes. The other three types centred on transformational changes that drive an organisation, transformational changes the focus on the relationships between different areas of an organisation, and transformational changes related to work design and activity. The framework presented by Beckhard (1992) suggests that transformation can be realised through single changes of central aspects of an organisation, such as its culture, mission and operations. The weakness of the framework is that each change is representative of traditional episodic types of change commenced in a relatively simple structured organisation. Transformational change is complex and should be multidimensional, multileveled, and bring about 'deeper transformation' (Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2014; Levy and Merry (1986).

Over the past decade and a half, the thoughts on transformational change evolved further to embrace and portray the complexities and multidimensional aspects associated with the organisational transformation (Wischnevsky and Damanpour, 2006). After reviewing many previously developed models of Cummings and Huse (1989) and King and Anderson (1995), Chapman (2002) presented the complexity of transformational change by defining three core components of transformational change. The first, that such changes were initiated in the bounds of existing complexity and overlapping systems. The second, that such changes largely adopt cultural issues, while a change in structures and processes are secondary aspects. Thirdly, transformational change is spearheaded by top-flight management, aided and facilitated by all members. The typology presented by Chapman (2002) acknowledges the complexity associated with a transformational change endeavour by not ignoring the organisational environment and other elements such as people, process and structure. The typology also acknowledges broader support and participation from workforce members. The challenge, as voiced by King and Anderson (1995), is to manage such complexity in practice to implement change successfully.

The latest literature on transformational change encircles the variety of concepts previously discussed with the addition of questioning how best to implement changes in practice. Scholars have not agreed on definition, requirement, element and expected outcome. However, there is more interest and research related to testing different models in practice (Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015; Zare *et al.*, 2015). The criticality is surrounding transformational change as short-lived 'management fads' and failing to produce long term improvements that ignore sustainability Arya (2012). The conclusion made here was that a

transformational change requires measures to sustain a change to achieve success. This opinion is also aligned with McNulty and Ferlies' (2002) empirical case study in a health care system in the UK. The researchers also mentioned the significance of sustained results and that transformation should be viewed beyond short-term gains. In this capacity, Arya (2012) mentions three ingredients vital to such sustained transformation. First, formulations and communication of a strategic vision associated with the transformation, secondly, the vision is supported by cultural norms and procedures, and thirdly, implemented by leaders with the correct competencies. These three ingredients, according to Arya (2012), are pre-requisites and pivotal without which transformation would be unsuccessful.

When an organisational transformation is viewed through a personal transformation lens, it has been defined as a change that happens through movements from one stage to the next, thus embracing the incremental characteristics of transformation (Howard and Hirani, 2013). Viewing transformation from a synoptic perspective coupled with the appreciation surrounding its sequential nature augments managers' understanding of change of this nature. It permits the possibility for managers to monitor and plan these gradual improvements. Balogun, Hailey and Imogen (2014, 2015) have tested and practised Howard and Hirani's (2013) theory on an incremental feature of transformation in different transformational change cases and suggested a step-by-step method in models of transformational change in practice. They defined transformational change as changes that are large-scale to tackle essential organisation issues and that significantly impact an organisations culture. The researchers mention the reason why approximately 70% of change efforts fail is due to the challenge senior executives are faced with in balancing between how a firm currently operates and exploring and acting on new avenues of doing business at any given time.

Transformational change is presented in the above section. The understanding is that it is a significant change entailing fundamental rethinking of an organisations structure, management, and results to improve organisational performance. The definition of transformational change is that it is a change initiative with deep complexity comprised of concurrently running an array of organisational attributes encompassing culture, structure, process, and people. Transformational change is incremental that should firstly focus on shifting workforce attitudes and values before engaging in changing the structure and systems in an organisation. Arya's (2012) definition of transformational change encapsulates those mentioned above and also encapsulates sustainability to achieve the positive transformative impact of changes. With this in mind, the context of this research project intended to adopt this definition of transformational change to improve change implementation at Telco DWML.

Extending the strategic change discussion, there are also essential components of strategic renewal changes, in addition to strategic transformation changes that should not be ignored. There are many

concepts within strategic renewal changes that are common to transformation change. Firstly, a change of a strategic nature involves the whole organisation and impacts the organisation's long-term development (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Nonaka, 1988). Secondly, it is a co-evolutionary process that leads an organisation to adapt its competencies based on the environment to enhance competitive advantage (Burgelman, 1983; Flier, Van Den Bosch and Volberda, 2003; Volberda, Baden-Fuller, Van den Bosch, 2001). Thirdly, strategic renewal entails the refreshment and replacement of strategic attributes (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009). Lastly, changes associated with strategic renewal are based on the result of learning and experimentation (Burgelman, 1991; Floyd and Lane, 2000). For this research project, the adopted definition of strategic renewal was Agarwal and Helfat (2009) and Volberda, Baden-Fuller, Van den Bosch, 2001) as a strategic change that requires the replacement and refreshment of strategic attributes. Consequently, this leads to and implies an organisation to adapt to shifting environments and altering its path dependence.

## 2.5 Common Themes in Transformational Change and Transformative Strategic Renewal

Agarwal and Helfat (2009) and Leavy's (1997) description of discontinuous strategic transformation of strategic renewal is parallel to the transformational change definition provided by Arya (2012) in that the researchers view strategic change as fundamentally changing an organisations management and structure. Both processes entail change throughout the organisation by enacting strategic attributes. In addition to the suggested strategic attributes to include in strategic renewal, Agarwal and Helfat (2009) also itemised organisational mind-set. It suggests that culture change in an organisation could also be part of transformative strategic renewal. It is comparable to transformational change in which culture change is a principal component of change; subsequently, structural changes are developed (Chapman, 2002).

In essence, it underscores the conceptual resemblance of transformational strategic change with transformational strategic renewal. The two concepts are classified as strategic changes, which serves as an umbrella concept referred to as the transformation of the strategic profile of an organisation (Floyd and Lane, 2000). The types of changes encased within both concepts can be portrayed as fundamental and essential shifts that necessitate major and vital rethinking to the extent that challenges the core ideas and foundation that an organisation is constructed (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Arya, 2012; Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015). Moreover, the management and leadership approach of both types of changes is spearheaded by senior management and actioned, facilitated and enabled by all staff members (Arya, 2012; King and Anderson, 1995; Volberda, Baden-Fuller, Van den Bosch, 2001).

Upon review of the literature, two core differences were revealed between the two concepts. Firstly, transformational changes encompass all types of organisational changes, while strategic renewal focuses on refreshment and replacement of attributes, not including extensions and deletions (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009). Secondly, transformational change gives more attention to culture change (Limerick, Passfield and Cunningham, 1994; King and Anderson, 1995), while strategic renewal incorporates it as a potential component of renewal.

Keeping in mind the similarities between both concepts, the section that follows reviews various common themes and influencing factors embedded within the two concepts that affect and enable a change that could be considered to improve change implementation. The common themes include participation and involvement, learning and development (L&D), and leadership. Later, the theme of leadership is discussed in the context of the overarching framework of change, with a summary of the leadership role in other themes. Upon reviewing, evaluating and integrating the literature on these themes, additional research was conducted to advance understanding surrounding the scholarly perspective and position on these topics, the ongoing discourse, and the aspects of their models that could also be used in the research project.

#### 2.5.1 Participation and Involvement

The reviewed literature on transformational change suggests that there is a broad agreement that participation of all actors is critical to achieving successful change. Kotter (1995) stated that unless the workforce is involved and ready to assist in the change, and willing to go through sacrifices, then change will not happen. The difference between first-order change and second-order, transformational change, is the participation and conversion of staff members to become agents of change in the latter (Chapman, 2002). The real value of participation and involvement is that it creates avenues to generate new perspectives and information by employees (Chapman, 2002). The contribution that frontline employees can make regarding the innovativeness of business by having them involved is frequently undervalued (Martin-de Casto *et al.*, 2013; Seo *et al.*, 2012). Martin-de Casto *et al.* (2013) demonstrated the value of characterising diverse varieties of management strategies to engage staff in joint decision-making and reduce levels of job stress. Purdy and Manning (2014) conducted a study related to participatory leadership practices and found that managers who employed and practised active listening had a higher chance of obtaining employee approval and getting employees on board for change. Managers need to listen to both the feelings and facts conveyed by the workforce to increase the chances of employee engagement during a change process (Day *et al.*, 2014; Van de Ven and Sun, 2011). Engaging staff and offering clarity help employees recognise the impact change has and helps employees anticipate what is

to come at an individual level (Zepeda and Mayers, 2013). Anticipation can increase self-efficacy (Van de Ven and Sun, 2011). Team communication promotes engagement and can have a positive influence on the aftereffects of the change process (Xie *et al.*, 2012). Purdy and Manning (2014) also established that employee perception governed the extent that leaders can influence employee performance and behaviour.

The change management literature on strategic renewal does not focus on the issue of participation and involvement. However, some scholars have undertaken the issue highlighting its relevance and importance in the change process. For example, Volberda, Baden-Fuller, Van den Bosch (2001) underscored the requirement for extensive involvement at all levels and stages in changes, but more critically, workforce contribution in shaping the direction of the renewal process. The theorists asserted that heightened employee involvement improves quality and injects speed in terms of change renewal outcome. Also, deep participation and involvement in changes empowers employees and also makes them feel respected, consequently enhances employee commitment to changes, resulting in a likelihood to increase change success (Auster, Wylie and Valente, 2005). Some scholars acknowledge by not having employees on board during change initiatives can be a principal cause of ineffective improvements (Fuchs and Prouska, 2014; Helper and Henderson, 2014). In this capacity, it is the role and responsibility of management and leaders to tie employees together and motivate individuals to participate in changes (Arya, 2012; Chakravarthy and Gargiulo, 1998; Kotter, 1995; Volberda, Baden-Fuller, Van den Bosch, 2001).

It is worth pointing out that the conceptual models that were reviewed assumed individuals are change ready, willing to make the necessary sacrifices and compromise on their stability. In this respect, many individuals respond negatively to the need to continuously deliver results while at the same time needing to accept new roles and responsibilities within the change. In this regard, demands can be high and exceed ongoing resource capacity that can cause employees to feel overwhelmed (Bouckennooghe, 2012). Furthermore, during times of change, employees must be prepared to let their sense of stability go (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). The letting go of stability is often conjoined with anger, uncertainty, anxiety, and stress (Parlalis, 2011). Worch *et al.* (2012) found that many employees do not want to support changes as a significant number of them had to leave the company they were working for.

In this capacity, employees reaction to change is a vital consideration when designing and implementing change (Stensaker and Meyer, 2011). If the implementation of change is successful, it can also enhance organisation performance (Pieterse, Caniels and Homan, 2012). Employees often respond to change differently, and reactions can radically fluctuate (Carter *et al.*, 2013; Mohamed and Nor, 2013). One of

the central challenges for leaders is how to manage the polarity of employee responses and reactions to change (Geertshuis, Morrison and Cooper-Thomas, 2015; Lam and O'Higgins, 2012). Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis (2013) examination regarding change readiness, highlighted the notion of '*change reaction*' (p.115). This is a particular type of employee behaviour that is either resistant towards or in support of a change effort. How the workforce reacts to change can impact the success and performance of an organisation (Helper and Henderson, 2014). What implementation strategies management use for organisational change is critical to mark a successful change initiative (Helper and Henderson, 2014). Management who take an interest in employee reactions towards change can reduce employee stress which can help towards change implementation (Vander Elst *et al.*, 2014).

Change reaction has been categorised into three distinct groups by Auster, Wylie and Valente, (2005). The first comprises of individual openness to change, the second group consists of those who may be open, but may also have reasons to be unsupportive. The last group are those who tend to react negatively to change. The authors mention that the socio-political dynamics and various groups influence the groups in an organisation with their respective values, interests, perspectives and priorities. The authors further suggest that those who are unsupportive of change need to have their interests and perspective heard through integrating them into the change process; otherwise, the risk of change failure is heightened considerably.

Concerning many academics, change resistance according to Bareil (2013) is an individuals' anti-change response which according to Piderit (2000) is an employees' unreadiness or reluctance to accept change. Employee change resistance can be a barrier to organisations (Smollan, 2006). Resistance is often conveyed in behavioural terms (inaction or action, defiance) or emotions (frustration, anxiety, aggression). Organisational politics and interests of the groups that are not for change can also trigger change resistance (Ferris *et al.*, 1989, cited in Bouckenoghe, 2012). Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis (2011) provided a thorough evaluation of empirical studies centred on organisational change and abstracted recipients of change reactions as multidimensional attitudes. This perspective aligns with Piderit's (2000) three-way multilateral attitudinal categorisation of responses along affective, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions. Individuals are considered to be change-resistant if responses are negative along all three dimensions, individuals are considered supportive of change if responses are positive along all three dimensions, and individuals are considered ambivalent toward change if the responses are consistently between positive and negative responses (Piderit, 2000). Positive and negative attitudes are linked with readiness and resistance to change and the nucleus of several studies; while research focusing on

ambivalent attitudes towards change is limited (Bouckennooghe, 2010; Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011; Peachey and Bruening, 2012; Rafferty, Jimmieson and Restubog, 2013).

Employee resistance to change can also be interpreted as an indicator that workforce members genuinely care about others or specifically the organisation itself (Klonek, Lehmann-Willenbrock and Kauffeld, 2014). Resistance to change can negatively affect the change process considerably if not addressed properly (Klonek, Lehmann-Willenbrock and Kauffeld, 2014). How an organisation perceives resistance can determine if the change process will be hampered or improve the situation for which the change initiative was originally planned (Bateh, Castaneda and Farah, 2013). Employee indifference or dispiritedness towards organisational change can be worse than resistance. According to Klonek, Lehmann-Willenbrock and Kauffeld (2014), resistance is a natural human response that provokes defence mechanisms and should be expected and respected rather than interpreted as a barrier. Forcing employees into the unknown is not considered the correct approach as this will promote a type of resistance where employees may feel they are losing something of value if they subscribe to the change (Klonek, Lehmann-Willenbrock and Kauffeld, 2014). Bennebroek Gravenhorst, Werkman and Boonstra (2003) found that employee resistance to change occurs during ineffective change processes and that positive change does not stimulate resistance. The researchers also assert that employee resistance towards change is a normal response to any form of change. Although change resistance is well-studied and is a well-accepted phenomenon among scholars that worked on concepts of change management, little attention is given by scholars of the phenomenon in the context of transformation change and strategic renewal (Leavy, 1997).

The conventional perspective on employee resistance is that it is a threat, hindrance or obstacle (Bareil, 2013). Conversely, modern literature considers and places resistance under a positive light, as a resource (Bareil, 2013; Ford and Ford, 2010; Piderit, 2000). Academics that support this perspective, view resistance as an opportunity to gather feedback to change in the shape of ambivalence, discomfort, and concern related to the change, the whole of which can be attended to (Bareil, 2013; Piderit, 2000). Using two-way feedback to gather information is important regarding the development of change management strategies (Kim, Sting and Loch, 2014; Kotter, 1995). Canter *et al.* (2013) view feedback during times of change as a positive means to obtain staff support. Receiving feedback can achieve a sustainable outcome (Bouckennooghe, 2012; Keyton *et al.*, 2013; Shin, Taylor and Seo, 2012). However, in practice, managers still have a negative perception of resistance and view employees that are change-resistant as disobedient (Piderit, 2000). Managers also tend to blame employees for failing change efforts without attributing blame or failure to themselves (Ford and Ford, 2010).

The literature centred on organisational change also suggests positive workforce attitudes towards change relates to a person's readiness for change, openness to change, and commitment towards a change effort. Choi (2011) and Rafferty, Jimmieson and Restubog (2013) conceptualise change readiness as a cognitive state, in which an individual engages in change-support behaviour constructed on one's beliefs, intentions and attitude. Mazzei (2014) conducted a study to examine how employees cognitively react to change. Further analysis showcased that situational awareness and sensemaking are known cognitive methods that scholars have confirmed employees utilise when trying to adapt, respond and survive with change (Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013; Mazzei, 2014). Change readiness has been described as an individual's set of expectations and assumptions, coupled with their impressions associated with a proposed change initiative (Choi and Ruona, 2011). The definitions associated with readiness to change are wide-ranging. There is a lack of an exact conceptual definition of change readiness, according to Stevens (2013). As noted by Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis (2013) extant research underscored differing variables fostering change readiness.

There are many beliefs and perceptions of an individual that play a vital role in the underlying forces of organisational change. Choi (2011) abstracted numerous definitions and usages of the change readiness concept found in the literature related to organisational change as centring on efficacy, appropriateness, support, and individual benefits from change efforts. The author affirmed that individuals positively engage in behaviours related to change if there is a heightened self-efficacy towards a change initiative. Without ignoring Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and the theory of planned behaviour, Rafferty, Jimmieson and Restubog (2013) recognised certain beliefs people formulated related to proposed organisational changes that trigger their change readiness. The beliefs exemplify an individual's perspective of (a) the need for change (i.e., discrepancy), (b) the content and substance of change as it refers to meeting the identified need (i.e., appropriateness), (c) confidence in oneself and others' skills to implement the change (i.e., efficacy), (d) leadership commitment (i.e., principal support), and (e) personal gains (i.e., personal valence).

The perceptions employees have of an organisations change capability (i.e., organisational valence) to commence change impact the person's level of change readiness (Rafferty, Jimmieson and Restubog (2013). An individual's perceptions related to the need for change prompts their intentions towards change (Vakola, 2014). To supplement the human beliefs debate concerning implications of change on an organisation (i.e., efficacy, discrepancy, and organisational valence), experiential support also exists related to beliefs such as personal valence (i.e., beneficial to a person) and leadership support, as workforce members' beliefs influencing change readiness (Stevens, 2013). How an individual interprets



events related to change can steer the success of change implementation (Klonek, Lehmann-Willenbrock and Kauffeld, 2014).

In this respect, employee readiness towards change can be an impediment or enabler to change processes also. Readiness to change can act as a primary factor that shapes initial staff support for a given change effort (Holt *et al.* 2007, 2010). According to Holt *et al.* (2007), readiness demonstrates how emotionally and cognitively members in an organisation are inclined concerning a change plan that modifies the status quo. The researchers identified four areas that impact readiness, context, content, process, and workforce adopting the change readiness.

McKay, Kuntz and Naswall (2013) conducted a study to ascertain if communications related to change, staff prospect to participate in change, and employee affective commitment to change, can play a part in staff resistance and readiness attitudes. The researchers held that change readiness could stimulate change-resistant attitudes. However, the relationship between employee readiness and employee resistance is underexplored. Survey responses from 102 workforce members in changing firms throughout Australia and New Zealand showcased that exclusive relationships exist between readiness for change and communication related to change, participation and involvement, and employee affective commitment towards change. The results also disclosed that employee readiness for change could mould employee intent to change resistance (McKay, Kuntz and Naswall, 2013). Also, Enz (2012) accentuated a participative model, embracing an employee-centred change design and implementation can be more productive.

Individual employee readiness can affect organisational change (Choi and Ruona, 2011). More specifically, to be change-ready is a reflection of Lewin's (1947) three-phase model of change, the first phase of unfreezing, that is paramount for successful change roll-out. The scholars further assert that focusing on individual change readiness instead of change resistance may be more beneficial when planning and implementing change initiatives. After reviewing the literature surrounding the construct of change readiness and the impact it has on organisational change, Choi and Ruona (2011) found a higher rate of readiness for change exists if normative-reductive change strategies are in place and those affected by the change effort perceive that the work environment encompasses a learning-oriented one.

Openness to change efforts has behavioural and psychological consequences on recipients of change. Many theorists labelled openness to change as enfolding a person's level of acceptance and willingness to support change, as well as an individual's positive emotions related to the implications of change (Vakola, Armenakis and Oreg, 2013; Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2013). There are personal factors associated with openness to change such as (a) previous experiences with change efforts that have failed, (b)

assessments ensuing potential job loss, (c) a feeling of mistrust in management, and (d) a lack of involvement and participation in the development of the change (Choi, 2011). Employee participation and engagement promotes dialogue generating optimistic responses towards organisational change (McKay, Kuntz and Naswall, 2013). Elements forecasting greater levels of openness to change include (a) workforce involvement in change planning, (b) advanced levels of self-efficacy, and (c) receiving communications related to the change (Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2013). Another factor that influences employee openness to change is the level of trust staff have in their supervisors (Shah and Syed Ghulam, 2010).

Research has indicated employee trust in leaders is a critical aspect of organisational change, either as a precursor or an after-effect of working relationships (Neves and Caetano, 2009; Saunders and Thornhill, 2003). In a study consisting of a 32-item list of psychological traits valued by workers, contributors to the study tiered respect and trust, followed by honest and open communication as most important (Lester and Kickul, 2001). Mollering (2001) alludes that trust is something that derives from propitious expectations regarding an individual's interpretation of reality, helped by a pause of incredulity, followed by an individual taking a leap of faith. Research also indicates essential properties surrounding employee participation, including the freedom to express ideas, open communication, mutual respect and shared vision, are essential factors in nurturing trust and managing organisational change (Nyhan, 2000).

Including employees as part of the decision-making process highlights managements' trust in employees (Erturk, 2008). Contributions made by employees help to build perceptions of trust and meaningful, trusted relationships (Husted and Michailova, 2002; Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli, 2001). The implication is trust in management, and the organisation grows when employees feel valued and are contributing to organisational decisions. Effectively, employee trust in the organisation and management may diminish if employees feel their contributions do not matter or if an employee encounters non-involvement. According to Lines *et al.* (2005), continuous participation in the decision-making process increases employee trust. However, trust declines when employees experience emotional discomfort through a lack of participation. Frazer *et al.* (2010) demonstrate a connection with trust and the perception of fairness in senior management and immediate supervisors. The findings suggest that when management decisions related to change are formulated, concern and thought needs to be given to the impact the decisions have on employees and not only on organisational performance.

A study conducted by Van den Heuvel, Schalk and Van Assen (2015) found trust in management and recognition of staff vulnerability to actions based on management decisions, compellingly linked to employee intent to change resistance. Trust in management capacity to lead organisation-wide change negatively correlated with affective, behavioural, and cognitive resistance to change (Ford and Ford, 2010). Despite employees forming a negative attitudinal response to change that contributes to unsuccessful organisational change implementation, staff members may develop positive attitudes to change.

Exposure of forthcoming change to employees enhances the degree of openness to change and reduces undesirable psychological responses connected with anxiety, stress, depression, and job satisfaction (Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis, 2011). A drop in levels of change acceptance is characteristic of (a) staff intentions to leave the company, (b) fallen levels of job satisfaction, and (c) growing irritability (Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2013).

The literature surrounding the theory of commitment in an organisational context defines change commitment as a psychological state inducing a person to some action steered towards an objective (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002). Magnifying this definition and mapping it to organisational change as the object for commitment, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) contended that employees affianced in supportive change behaviours centred on three beliefs: (a) change benefits the firm which makes it pleasing to change (i.e., affective commitment to efforts centred around change), (b) costs related to failure in supporting the change (i.e., continued commitment towards efforts centred around change), and (c) obligations related to reciprocation, similar to the scenario of the psychological contract (i.e., normative commitment towards efforts centred around change). Effectively staff members feel a compulsion to engage in change support behaviours because they want to (feeling-based), have to (cost-based), and/or should (obligation based) (Jaros, 2010).

Concerning an individual's valence of the change impact at a work-unit and personal level, change commitment portrays a person's beliefs and embodies intentions to (a) change adoption, and (b) enthusiastically support the broader execution and organisational change success effort (Bouckennooghe, Schwarz and Minbashian, 2014; Choi, 2011). The researchers also showcased a reverse relationship between change commitment and turnover intentions.

Commitment is described as a mind-set that has extensive repercussion on behaviours related to change (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002). The authors refer to support for change as actions symbolising compliance towards change and also as a collection of voluntary behaviours outside of the formal job requirements such as embracing, cooperating, and promoting a change (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002).

Normative and affective commitment towards a change effort positively linked to non-discretionary and discretionary supportive behaviours. Continuance commitment was negatively associated with voluntary behaviours (i.e. cooperation, championing) and positively with compliance, suggestive of change support (Bouckennooghe, Schwarz and Minbashian, 2014).

Employees' internal and external dynamics during a change effort process can affect their change commitment levels. According to Choi (2011), staff members undergo an individual evaluation surrounding change implications. The process is positively related to an individual's notion of self-efficacy regarding a change. A person's attitude and behaviour similarly are related to expectations surrounding reinforcement or behavioural outcomes perceived as dependent upon external or internal forces. The notion of external locus of control denotes an individual's beliefs to have no control over events perceived as determined by fate, luck, chance, or others with more responsibility and power. Internal locus of control is the opposite, referring to a person's beliefs of one's own ability to control outcomes and the environment (McShane and Von Glinow, 2010). A study conducted by Tong and Wang (2012) found external locus of control to be positively linked with continuance commitment to change while internal locus of control positively correlated with a normative and affective commitment to change.

A theoretical model connecting the effects of employee expectations on employee change commitment was used to assess if communications related to change acted as a mediating variable between exchanges of followers and their leaders, also, to affect expectations for change outcomes (Portoghese *et al.*, 2012). The researchers used a predictive, non-experimental design, randomly selecting a sample of 395 nurses and used structural equation modelling. The findings suggested that positive expectations directly steer affective commitment to change, and in contrast, negative expectations directly influence employees' continued loyalty and change commitment levels. The research revealed that both leader-member exchange (LMX) and communication could steer nurses' expectations and decisions to adapt to change. Also, the researchers found that the nurses' expectations related to the change has a stable association with their commitment towards a change initiative.

Also, introducing additional responsibilities, achieved by leaders investing time to prepare employees to make decisions when executing change can consequently increase employee readiness when a situation arises that requires an efficient decision (Combe, 2014). Bisel, Messersmith and Kelley (2012) and Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis (2013) found that employee engagement and commitment levels advance and their inclination to champion change is enhanced when employees are involved in the decision-making process. Purdy and Mannings' (2014) study on participative leadership practices, found

management engaging in active listening skills had far greater success in getting employees on board for change. Management who listen to the expressions of realities and sentiments of the workforce has a higher chance of getting staff involved in a change process (Day *et al.*, 2014; Van de Ven and Sun, 2011). The evaluation of the varied range of findings in the Purdy and Manning (2014) study shows that the factors that motivate employees for change may span from informal engagement with management at the team and individual level to formal business-wide strategies.

The interactions a person has with their work environment during change refers to external dynamics. The quality and design of formal communication related to a change effort influences change commitment (Bouckennooghe, 2012). Leadership style strongly correlates with follower affective change commitment (Jaros, 2010). Employee perception of supervisor change competence impacts perceived change support, which in turn positively stimulates normative and affective change commitment. Organisational members' perception of supervisor change competence lessens perceptions of costs related to not implementing an organisational change effort (i.e. continuance commitment) (Neves, 2011; Neves and Caetano, 2009). A firm's change history and trust in supervisors positively relates to change commitment and directly implicates organisational citizenship behaviour and employee performance (Bouckennooghe, 2012; Rafferty and Restubog, 2010).

Something noteworthy for managers according to Ford and Ford (2010), is that many times people that voice their concerns or objections to a change are doing so with good intentions, as they care about doing the right thing and potentially see shortcomings in a proposed change process. There is a management need to engage such people, and many scholars have provided suggestions as to how. The suggestion provided by Piderit (2000) and Vince and Broussine (1996) is for managers and leaders to engage with ambivalent staff members, by providing a platform for them to speak of their concerns to try to make sense of the underlying issues and accordingly construct communication techniques that target their concerns. Bareil (2013) and Ford and Ford (2010) mention open dialogue as a technique to converse about preoccupations and concerns of staff members to help understand the impact of changes on employees. Such techniques can assist managers and leaders in grasping an understanding of resisters better, validating concerns through evaluation, and accordingly engage in making changes to a proposed change process, or find an acceptable solution to address highlighted issues.

In the process of creating dialogue, managers should consider issues centred around the political dynamics within a firm, the groups that employees fall into or align with, with particular focus on those who resist change (Auster, Wylie and Valente, 2005). Focusing efforts towards those groups to create a dialogue to make sense of their concerns is a viable approach to make an impact on broader communities

within the organisation. The suggestion also presented by Auster, Wylie and Valente, (2005) is to take benefit from the group of an early adopter, i.e. those open to change, to engage and work along with resistant colleagues as they can collaborate on experiences, insights, actions to be taken and avenues to fulfilling actions. The early stages of change are when most resistance is experienced, but it is during this time that the value of resistance can be used positively. Ford and Ford (2010) suggest using early resistance as a podium to explain and keep change alive through a discussion centred on negative sentiments and concerns that draws people together and accordingly push for changes in an organisation. Balogun, Hailey and Imogen (2015) suggest that leaders use a provocative approach to raising ambiguity to intentionally create instability to encourage staff to question the change and take on new thinking energetically. Morrison and Milliken (2000) warn that such an approach, particularly in a siloed environment is risky. Apart from those who are change-ready and willing to adapt, there will always be employees who will continuously block changes and will not want to engage in any dialogue (Ford and Ford, 2010). As suggested by Bareil (2013), in difficult circumstances, disciplinary actions such as retirement, transfers or termination can be taken in line with legal regulations to send the necessary signal to resistors surrounding the seriousness of the change and level of acceptable tolerance.

The review of the literature revealed that employee participation and involvement, and employee willingness and openness to change is critical to the implementation and success of change initiatives. Leaders have an essential role in informing people about the change and motivating employees to be part of the process. Also, the literature showed individual reactions to change are different, dependant on the groups they belong to, their sentiments, interests and their own opinion on the changes proposed. With this in mind, leaders have a responsibility to engage with those groups to create a dialogue to collaborate, based on open discussion to understand their concerns, fears and interests better. Such an approach creates an arena for staff members to voice their concerns and make sense of proposed changes in a collective manner, which in turn can potentially reduce resistance, strengthen readiness, enhance openness, improve commitment, and increase acceptance and support for changes. Dialogue of this nature can be used as a means to improve change implementation as concerns raised may be valid. Concerning the research project, the issues for potential review in the context of Telco DWML are threefold. First, what was the past approach taken by leaders to assist the workforce in understanding and accepting changes. Secondly, did leaders address issues and concerns raised by employees. Thirdly, what communication tools and techniques were used and were most successful in increasing workforce participation and awareness. From an action research (AR) standpoint, the

information would provide context-specific guidance on the leadership approach to engage the workforce, gain staff buy-in, and address employee concerns about future change.

### 2.5.2 Learning and Development

OD or human resources (HR) are often responsible for L&D for staff to meet the requirements for an organisation (Waddell *et al.*, 2017). The global market is being transformed as organisations try to maintain a competitive edge resulting in firms needing to move with increased speed, and developing the capability to adapt and engage in changing (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2013; Kane, 2016; Pagani, 2013). The definition of change provided by Noe (2017) indicates that new interventions, including L&D, should be accepted and embraced by staff and management.

Quinn (1982) and Rowden (2001) conceptualised strategic change as an experimentation and learning process that continually evolves. The continuous evolution process entails identifying and solving problems, learning and experimenting. Through this process, the organisation builds the capacity to grow and achieve its purpose (Daft and Marcic cited in Rowden, 2001). Learning is a critical element for an organisation to manage its success (Crossan and Bedrow, 2003).

Limerick, Passfield and Cunnington (1994) mention that to understand the nature of organisational change, organisational learning is one of the two approaches for organisational transformation. In such organisations, employees learn and experiment, continuously expand their understanding and knowledge, allowing the organisation to adapt quickly and change per the environment (Rowden, 2001). The link between learning and adaptability to the environment sits at the heart of strategic renewal.

There is a difference between lower and higher-order learning identified in the framework of strategic renewal (Leavy, 1997). Crossan and Bedrow (2003) refer to this as single and double-loop learning. Lower-order learning is exploitative learning which is adaptive and associated with gradual, incremental change with the same paradigm (Leavy, 1997). Higher-order learning is generative by nature and signifies a paradigm shift, bestowing explorative learning (Leavy, 1997). The two forms of learning are self-reinforcing but strain with one another (Levy, 1997). The challenge is to acquire a balance between the new learning, exploitation, and the exploration of existing knowledge, which then allows an organisation to achieve strategic renewal (Crossan, Lane and White, 1999).

The model of learning depicted by Crossan, Lane and White (1999) includes four processes. The model has also been used by Crossan and Bedrow (2003) and Lengnick-Hall and Inocencio-Gray (2013). The four processes in the model include intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalising that co-occur at different levels. Intuiting and interpreting occur at an individual level, interpreting and integrating

occur at a group level, and the process of integrating and institutionalising occur at an organisational level. Instituted learning enables exploitation, while the process of intuiting, interpreting, and integrating enable exploration. The primary difference in the context of the strain between the two types of learning is that exploitation is institutionalised knowledge that follows an already well-defined structure and routine in an organisation, and exploration is centred on intuition and interpretation and is therefore less-defined and not as tangible (Crossan and Bedrow, 2003).

Leaders are responsible for creating an environment of organisational learning (Leavy, 1997; Limerick, Passfield and Cunnington, 1994). The advice provided to build such an organisation is for leaders to cogitate learning as a continuous process in that every experience is representative of an opportunity to learn and to be most effective, learnings should be shared (Rowden, 2001). Continuous learning can be stimulated by leaders who create a conducive environment for creativity and innovation (Auster, Wylie and Valente, 2005). Such an environment would make employees feel that their creative solutions and ideas are valued and welcomed and that learning is firmly encouraged. Leaders in this capacity need to demonstrate their commitment to learning for employees to believe that learning is taken seriously and valued. Teixeira and Werther (2013) provide an example of such an environment in Google, where staff are given 'free time' to generate creative ideas. Furthermore, managers should schedule weekly learning sessions with a parallel training session so the workforce can select which sessions they would like to attend (Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015). The joint approach to learning and sharing of experiences also relaxes departmental boundaries, breaks silos and improves communication throughout different layers and hierarchy of the organisation (Rowden, 2001).

Organisations practising change management should recognise that change can either be planned or unplanned (Erasmus *et al.*, 2015; Griffin, Rafferty and Mason, 2004; Vakola, 2014). In this capacity, employee skills need to be revised, whereby new skills are introduced, or a total reskilling of workforce members may well be needed during a change process (Erasmus *et al.*, 2015; Ilander *et al.*, 2016; Rafferty and Simons, 2006).

A study accomplished by Ilander *et al.* (2016) to discover the effect of continuous training in business firms found that incorporating continuous training is essential to provide employees with the opportunity to excel and develop on the job. The study revealed that companies that incorporate training programs tend to have a definitive strategic attitude with a more conscientious appreciation of the market in which they operate and the competition within that market. Effective training tools allow managers to voice their expectations and ingrain objectives to every employee, which can motivate staff to develop independent learning skills (Al Saifi, Dillon and McQueen, 2016).



In light of the above assertions and mapping it to the context of Telco DWML, employee L&D is an integral component of change management, which may allow the change adaptation process for employees to be accepted more easily. Telco DWML is no exception when focusing on the need for change, given the competitive technological space it operates in. If Telco DWML is to remain competitive and want to fulfil the strategic desire to maintain accelerated growth, successful change adaption becomes paramount. Change adaption can be achieved through understanding to nurture and develop workforce capabilities, which in turn can positively contribute to the organisation's overall development (Tassey, 2014; Urtasun-Alonso *et al.*, 2014). People are critical to an organisations success and those who invest in their people's capabilities, competencies and experiences have a greater chance to outperform their competitors. Ferreira and Leite (2013) defend this notion by articulating that developing staff is a quintessential determinant of competitiveness, organisational performance and economic growth. An organisation requires to have employees that are up to date and skilled to increase productivity, enhance performance, promote competitiveness, reduce employee turnover and improve customer satisfaction (Ferreira and Leite, 2013).

Change can occur in many areas of an organisation, including leadership and structure; shifting towards decentralised or centralised, network establishments, self-directed groups or cell (Burke, 2014). Training may help workforce members to learn and develop, and to accustom themselves to such changes. This said, both L&D when combined, centre on an organisation's problem solving and empowers staff to learn best work practices in the context of a given organisational culture promoting efficiency and effectivity, and to generally improve processes (Burke, 2014).

On many occasions, transformation and change breeds employee resistance towards leaders and management. L&D is a vital component of a change implementation strategy exposing employees to new processes and providing an outlet for employees to contribute to shaping change events imperative to a firm's survival (Erasmus *et al.*, 2015; Swanson and Creed, 2014; Swanson *et al.*, 2012). It is the responsibility of management and leaders in an organisation to support an L&D initiative. Equally, those to be trained and developed must also be willing, able and open to the benefits of such an initiative (Erasmus *et al.*, 2015; Swanson *et al.*, 2012). It is essential that the human resource team plan and assist in the execution of L&D throughout the transformation and organisational change phases (Waddell *et al.*, 2017). There are other authors such as Forsyth (2012), who believe that L&D should be an ongoing process independent of organisational change and that employee's need training delivered in a variety of ways to achieve maximum organisational benefit and employee performance. In the context of employee resistance, educating workforce members on the need for organisational change, the associated change

event and change in business processes reduce employee resistance (Harigopal, 2006). Also, L&D provides a platform to prepare employees for change, offers a medium to constructively communicate the necessary skills and behaviours required by employees during times of change and provides a dais for trainers and coaches to articulate technological advancements that will influence staff tasks (Graham, 2013b; Harigopal, 2006).

Educating employees on the need for change through L&D reduces resistance towards change and promotes employee motivation for change Hayes (2010). In turn, motivated employees demonstrate feelings of work satisfaction as they adopt positive behaviours by seeing the benefits of a change initiative (Chih, Yang and Chang, 2012). Lower levels of work satisfaction will harm individual and organisational performance, which in the long run can result in a failed changed effort (Goris, 2007). Staff members are more likely to psychologically engage in change and demonstrate positive feelings towards change if they have the necessary support from management and leaders and feel their values and wellbeing are protected (Fuchs and Prouska, 2014). In this capacity, management and leaders of change have a responsibility to create an environment that can positively affect employee mind-set, behaviour and emotion regarding a change initiative (Fuchs and Prouska, 2014).

The reviewed literature revealed and recognises the concept of L&D and its importance when mapped to change management as it enhances an organisations capabilities allowing it to better fit with a changing environment that ultimately provides an avenue for an organisation to succeed (Crossan and Bedrow, 2003). However, there is still a gap surrounding the agreement on the concept and model of organisational learning (Crossan and Bedrow, 2003; Steenekamp, Botha and Moloi, 2012). The literature also accentuated the critical responsibilities of leaders in the process. With this in mind, I focused on the L&D agenda Telco DWML had during the previous change effort, how it was rolled out, and the role leadership had in that effort. The action component of the research project explored how leaders will foster L&D to successfully implement future change and the qualities and roles required by leaders to harbour L&D.

### 2.5.3 Leadership

Leadership is a key trigger and a force mentioned in the above sections that should not be underestimated to implement and make change successful and therefore requires further analysis. Strong leadership is at the foundation and is a crucial requirement for any change, mainly if it is transformative (Arya, 2012; Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015; Caldwell, 2003, Kotter, 1995). Transformative leadership is explained as an individual that is a change champion who sits at the very top, in a management position and is preferably an individual that is a new head of an organisation (Caldwell, 2003; Kotter, 1995). An

explanation as to why a new head is required is provided by Leavy (1997) upon reviewing a case of strategic renewal. The argument put forward was that only a minor number of existing executives are courageous and willing to dismantle the structures and process created by themselves that gave them importance, defending the requirement for a new individual for such a role. A comparable perspective is shared by Balogun, Hailey and Imogen (2015). The authors mention that the modern CEO generation understands what it means and takes to lead transformational change and are equipped with the change agenda to be implemented in an organisation. A similar view again is shared by Volberda, Baden-Fuller, Van den Bosch (2001) defining transformational renewal as something that is spearheaded by a chief executive and associated tasks that stretch beyond the administrative aspects to drive a transformation process from the front. The underlying message provided by these scholars is transformation leaders be placed at the apex of a hierarchy, to be a chief executive or be senior, so the transformation change initiative is coming from the top. There is also the notion that leadership of changes is a shared function within a team and not the sole responsibility of a particular individual (Arya, 2012; Hailey, 2001; Hurst, Rush and White, 1989; Leavy, 1997). However, the concern with shared leadership is dealing with different opinions regarding what it is that needs changing and the selection of renewal that is most appropriate (Floyd, 2000). For some, for transformational change to be successful, there not only needs to be a leader at the top. However, also, a multi-functional team of leaders that operate at different hierarchical levels, comprised of experts from HR, OD and L&D, and also other functional units critical to the improvement of the organisation (Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015; Toussaint, 2015; Volberda, Baden-Fuller, Van den Bosch, 2001). Doz and Kosonen (2010) pooled the contrasting single or shared leadership views together and developed a leadership framework of strategic renewal. The scholars described how the CEO or chief executive and the leadership team could operate together to attain transformation successfully. The framework aligns and facilitates the integration of interests, roles and aspirations of various stakeholders and actors part of the team. The framework aims to enhance collective engagement and commitment and promote dialogue from members within the team.

Various models surrounding the leadership of transformative changes led by either individuals or teams and a combination of the two is thus presented in the reviewed literature. A collective approach lead by information sharing creates awareness (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti and Bakker, 2014; Grant and Hartley, 2013). It promotes acceptance through fair judgement and disposition towards an initiative (Michel, By and Burnes, 2013). A mutual model enhances employee commitment leading to employee readiness for change (Bouckenooghe, 2012; Raelin, 2003; Van den Heuvel, Demerouti and Bakker, 2014; Welch, 2012). Lack of commitment from employees can undermine change efforts (Abraham, 2000), and in turn, cause pessimism and attribute blame to leaders (Wanous, 2000). Vakola (2014) indicates that an

employee's commitment to change is a distinct outcome of intent, belief, and attitude to take on goals uniform with the business' success. The extent of commitment is crucial when trying to ascertain how much employees are on board with a proposed change (Meyer, Stanley and Parfyonova, 2012; Nohe *et al.*, 2013).

The discourse on leadership in the context of the framework of transformational change chiefly concentrated on leadership skills, roles and function (Arya, 2012; Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015, Caldwell, 2003; Kotter, 1995). In contrast, the strategic renewal discourse primarily focuses on managerial functions within the renewal process with a minor concentration on managers' leadership skills (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Floyd and Lane, 2000; Leavy, 1997; Teixeira and Werther, 2013). The different skills and functions of leaders of change versus managers are indicated by Arya (2012) and Gilley (2005). Gilley (2005) refers to managers as people who 'push things' to materialise (p.6) with an operational focus on matters such as planning, directing, organising, and controlling. Leaders on the other hand, 'pull people' together to make things happen. Leaders should influence, inspire, motivate, facilitate, coach and guide Gilley (2005). Employee motivation derives from perceptions employees have of leaders or their management' leadership style (Hill *et al.*, 2012). Fernet, Austin and Vallerand (2012) conducted a study and found for organisations to draw upon and keep qualified, competent staff, the organisation needs to establish an environment that fosters, harbours and sustains employee motivation. A lack of workforce motivation negatively impact attitudes towards organisational change (Chih, Yang and Chang, 2012; Schouteten and Van Der Vleuten, 2013). Kopelman, Prottas and Falk (2012) showcased that staff are motivated by the notion of affable team relations, challenging tasks and participating in planning and decision-making during change. A leadership style that facilitates an optimistic perspective of staff behaviour can generate positive responses, but management must practice employee encouragement also (Coleman, 1996; Sahin, 2012).

Leaders are responsible for setting cultural norms and new behaviours and should be mentors and coaches (Arya, 2012). Often employee withdrawal behaviour is triggered by management itself (Matos Marques Simoes and Esposito, 2014), which make change implementation difficult (Fugate, Prussia and Kinicki, 2012; Shin, Taylor and Seo, 2012). The difficulty in combining good management and leadership skills and therefore, to have a separate leadership function was concluded by Caldwell (2003). Despite the conclusion expressed by Caldwell (2003), many scholars have constructed their work and lean towards a combined function of executives as both managers and leaders (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015; Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990; Kotter, 1995; Volberda, Baden-Fuller, Van

den Bosch, 2001). In theory, a combined function is recognised; however, in practice managers often lack the appropriate leadership skills and training (Zaccaro and Banks, 2004).

The above underscores the principal tasks associated with leadership in organisational changes. The tasks are centred around people, enhancing motivation and morale, developing relationships, and reaching out, appealing to and engaging the workforce at an emotional level (Arya, 2012). Also, leaders of change need to create an environment to exchange ideas and experiences through dialogue, where mutual trust and respect among stakeholders and actors is built (Arya, 2012; Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015).

Extending on the need to work with employees within an organisation, there is an equal responsibility for leaders of change to focus on tasks associated with working with external stakeholders, such as customers and competitors through initiating and maintaining discussions centred on the future of an organisation (Teixeira and Werther, 2013). The tasks associated with internal and external stakeholder management requires a leader to have efficient and robust communication skills (Agarwal and Helfat, 2009; Muja *et al.*, 2014). The focus of the communication inside the organisation is to inspire, empower and motivate the workforce. At the same time, the aim in the external environment would promote discussions to improve the adaptability and anticipation of the organisation (Teixeira and Werther, 2013). As mentioned in the participation and involvement section above, communication skills are critical to engaging staff members that are change-resistant through actively listening to them and creating a platform for dialogue to share thoughts and concerns (Balogun, Hailey and Imogen, 2015).

According to Witting (2012), organisational communication is critical as it helps organise, synchronise and harmonise staff members towards achieving a goal. Organisational communication is a channel to disseminate messages that convey information in office settings, motivates staff and voice emotion (Fuchs and Prouska, 2014). There are five key components of organisational communication (Ruck and Welch, 2012). These are (a) message source/sender, (b) the message or information itself, (c) the medium, (d) the receiver, decoder or listener, and (e) the feedback. The researchers also found barriers to communication such as filtering, language, mixed messages, communication apprehension, selective perception, gender differentiation and communication noise, which can impact the manager-frontline workforce relationship. The literature on communication informs us of the concept of directional communication, which moves diagonally, vertically and horizontally throughout a company (Lamprinakis, 2015), and verbal and non-verbal communication (Falkheimer, 2014; Lamprinakis, 2015; Mazzei, 2014; Men, 2014).

Information can be misunderstood, manipulated or filtered with vertical communication structures (Hambdi and Rajablu, 2012). Horizontal communication strategies may not be as impactful if an organisation has many layers, with rigid structures where reporting lines are very formalised (Fraser,

Gunawan and Goh, 2013), However, having a vertical structure can enrich the manager-employee relationship, resulting in increased levels of support and involvement in decision-making

The language used to communicate changes is a critical consideration. The language and tone should reduce ambiguity and eradicate staff uncertainties (Fuchs and Prouska, 2014). However, the use of jargon and ambiguous language is an accepted form of communication depending on the complexity of change and if used to communicate subtle messages by managers to employees (Woodhams, 2014). Management facial expressions, appearance, the tone of voice when conveying messages even not related to a business problem, and body movement are critical in shaping employee perception (Elfenbein, 2013), and hold a lot of communication value (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2012). Research indicates that face-to-face communication combined with written communication is the most effective method to provide clarity to employees (Falkheimer, 2014; Men, 2014). Poor communication strategies can negatively impact the success of a change effort (Geertshuis Morrison and Cooper-Thomas, 2015). Appropriate levels of communication can improve teamwork and reduce staff stress among employees who are going through change (Ruck and Welch, 2012).

To implement organisational change, there need to be change management and organisation communication strategies in place (Bull and Brown, 2012). Change and communication strategies should be symbiotic (Bisel, Messersmith and Kelley, 2012). According to Gandolfi (2013), communication maintains a successful union between communicators while tackling problems. The author asserts the importance of management to communicate with employees clearly and in doing so can elevate the success of a change initiative. The implementation and roll-out of effective communication and collaboration among staff can build solidarity, which can enrich workforce support for change (Carter *et al.*, 2013; Xie *et al.*, 2012). Communication encourages management to use suitable participative management strategies as a tactic to gain employee approval and improve motivation (Mohamed and Nor, 2013). Informal communication can be more valuable and successful than formal meetings (Grosser *et al.*, 2012; Shuck and Herd, 2012; Welch, 2012; White, Vanc and Stafford, 2010). However, having formal communication assists the workforce to understand better business expectations and goals (Bouckennooghe, 2012). Formal communication can help restore trust (Bouckennooghe, 2012). Formal communication can also help employees makes sense of the change phenomenon as it creates a situational awareness, allowing staff to respond and cope with change (Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013). Managing staff perception and communicating perceived benefits of change can motivate employees for change and reduce negative employee perceptions towards leadership commitment (Nohe *et al.*, 2013; Oreg and Berson 2011; Vakola, 2013). Managers steadily and methodically use formal means of

communication to achieve communication upwards and to pervade a downward communication flow regarding business initiatives to lower levels of the company (Shuck and Herd, 2012). The absence of communication equates to employees evading accountability and lacking definitive direction to deliver expectations (Kilroy and Dundon, 2015; Sager, 2015).

Leaders need to communicate an inspirational vision to help overcome employee resistance and habitual behaviours (Fuchs and Prouska, 2014; Hon, Bloom and Crant 2014; Hon and Lui, 2016; Kotter, 1995; Lewin, 1947). Without leadership to communicate the organisational change to employees, employees will likely feel misguided with no real direction, resulting in employees engaging in inappropriate practices (Tang and Gao, 2012). Creating awareness by communicating practical reasons for change and linking it to the organisation's vision can help the frontline workforce get on board (Beshtawi and Jaaron, 2014). Hon and Lui (2016) assert that people will behave in ways based on past success, relative ease, or certainty. From a psychological standpoint, Hon and Lui (2016) confirm that resistance is a typical workplace phenomenon. However, when allied with routine, urgency, pressure and communication, staff tend to conform to regular everyday organisation endeavours. It is up to leaders to communicate why a change needs to occur, how they will go about implementing the change and the impact it will have on individuals and the business (Battilana and Casciaro, 2012; Kuhn, 2012). Communicating the benefits of change can result in shifting staff members' negative perception of management and future change initiatives (Jacobs *et al.*, 2013), and reduce employee passive and active resistance (Heidenreich and Spieth, 2013). Continuous positive communication between management and employees also gives clarity surrounding goals and expectations which, in turn, increases the likelihood of staff member commitment to achieving goals (Kuhn, 2012; Parker *et al.*, 2013).

Leaders engaging in constructive communication can lead to an organisation's growth and promote employee advancement (Hynes, 2012). Matovic, Koch and Forgas (2014) explain that leaders who engage in constructive communication can empower front-line workers to be more positive and productive. Smet *et al.* (2016) conducted a study, and the findings suggest the style in which change is communicated is equally crucial as communicating realistically, meaning how honest, relevant and frequent information is passed regarding the change. If sufficient information is not available regarding the future state of an organisation, leaders should explain to staff why certain aspects of the change cannot be answered and ensure staff that leaders are not deliberately trying to deceive them (Smet *et al.*, 2016).

There is a comprehensive agreement within the reviewed literature surrounding the importance of good leadership for change design and for the implementation of change to be successful. The literature promotes the concept of dual management and leadership function for top executives and management

team. There are many skills underscored within the leadership domain with particular emphasises on effective communication to engage people, which has value to obtain workforce trust and commitment, and acceptance to change. It made sense based on the knowledge gained from the literature to review and assess two core aspects of leadership in change, roles and functions, and techniques and actions that were undertaken during the previous change effort. Specifically for role and functions, who led the previous change agenda, ascertain the distinct roles and functions, and how they were shared between managers. For the techniques and actions component, what leadership techniques were used, for example, participation and involvement, communication, and to manage resistance, and how impactful were the techniques. For the action element of the research project, participants were asked to share their thoughts and reflections on what and how they would alter the previous approach to improve the future design and implementation of change within the context of Telco DWML. Accordingly, I provided actionable recommendations and actions taken to improve change implementation.

#### 2.5.4 Summary: Leadership That Matters

Figure 1 below presents the research framework that guided the research project. I placed the common themes and linked them to key components of change. The research framework places leadership at the centre. It is linked with the two other themes as leadership functions are essential to delivering the themes. Also, leadership functions within the themes are paramount to improve change implementation; thus, the focus of this study. The framework also incorporates influencing factors deemed essential for change. They include vision, communication, behaviours, structures and processes. A favourable environment is created by the influencing factors that support and stimulate changes. Like the common themes, the influencing factors are vital for change to occur and are led by leaders and managers. The research framework is comprised of the common themes and influencing factors that permitted greater focus on the research questions and assisted in identifying issues pertinent to the action component of the research project.





**Figure 1: Research Framework - Locating Leadership in Change Management**

The framework visually depicts leadership as responsible for the influencing factors of change and therefore demonstrates the importance within change management. The conclusions are in keeping with many scholars who assert the importance of how leaders lead change (Rowland and Higgs, 2009; Valleala *et al.*, 2015). Organisational improvement is dependent on leadership performance (functions), and leaders are the main reason for the success of change efforts (Rowland and Higgs, 2009). In that capacity, leadership behaviour plays a vital role in changes (Valleala *et al.*, 2015).

In keeping with the research framework, the intention was to assess how change was led at two levels: the first level, the roles and functions of management and leaders during the previous change. At the second level, management and leaders of change actions that supported the previous change effort. Included within the leadership roles and functions are management and leaders of the change team, their vision of change, their style of leadership, capability for change implementation and monitor the achievement of change results. Supplementing those, I reviewed management and leaders of change actions in translating and communicating the change vision into action and how L&D was stimulated.

## 2.6 Summary and Transition

The chapter underscored two forms of strategic changes, transformational change and strategic renewal. The focus of the literature review was on transformational change as it contextually fitted the research organisation. However, strategic renewal characteristics are interwoven to present a more comprehensive discussion. The analysis of both strategic change types revealed three common themes that enable change

in both concepts, participation and involvement, L&D, and leadership. The themes were then placed in the research framework (Figure 1). Contained in each theme, the literature shed light on several influencing factors, elements, and processes that notably mark the success of change design and implementation and the management of change. In that capacity, the literature review inveterates the criticality of leadership roles and functions to deliver common themes. Accordingly, leadership was placed at the centre of the research framework linked with other themes. The literature validated leadership behaviour in the areas of change discussed and the influence it has on defining the rate of change success. Many vital questions surfaced during the review within each theme that could be assessed by the research study. The following chapter details the research methodology and showcases how data was collected, analysed, and validated in Telco DWML.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction and Philosophical Framework

Research methodology encompasses an array of differing assumptions about the type of knowledge and the methods to acquire that knowledge in combination with a group of ingrained assumptions related to characteristics of the phenomenon under investigation (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). In this respect, at this point, I feel it is necessary to express the philosophical framework and epistemological position that guided the research methodology selection.

The methodological framework for this study had two processes running in parallel: research and action. The research project addressed three objectives. Objective 1 and 2 formed the research component of the study. Objective 3 formed the action component. Objective 1 was to provide first-hand experiences of employees' perspective of the previous change efforts, the impact it had on them, and the beliefs they had regarding senior management effectiveness in implementing future change initiatives. Objective 2 was to develop actionable recommendations to improve the success of strategic change implementation for future change initiatives. Objective 3 of the study emerged after the presentation of actionable recommendations to senior managers and senior leaders. It focused on the development of required leadership competencies, i.e. management qualities related to and required for managers to lead and manage change.

To address objective 1, the proposition is that the reality in which this research project was assessed, was subjective, meaning as an action-researcher, I reflected on what the workforce deemed as their reality. The objective was not to collect facts and measures, but instead appreciate the different meanings and constructions that individuals have, based on their experiences of the previous change initiative.

I used employees' views and reflections on their reality to interpret and gain an understanding to reconstruct that reality and develop a better understanding through collective thinking and feeling to help me as a novice action-researcher. I hoped that knowledge would be socially constructed rather than testing assumptions. I sought to recognise and characterise many interpretations to try to comprehend how and if they influenced one another. With this in mind, I felt the most suitable philosophical framework for the research project was social constructionism using interpretive epistemology to produce knowledge of reality.

Social constructionism holds the perspective that reality is not objective or exterior, instead is socially constructed where meaning and interpretation is obtained through people using their subjective views and knowledge about reality (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012; Gergen, 1994a; Rodela, Cundill and

Wals, 2012; Shotter, 1993). The primary concept of this paradigm is how people make sense of and define their reality by using their morals, values, beliefs, knowledge and experiences (Gergen, 1985). To try to understand and to achieve a sense of reality, the researcher must unveil interpretations from a group of people regarding an issue or phenomenon (Rodela, Cundill and Wals, 2012). In essence, social constructionism helps the researcher to determine reality through people rather than by external factors and objectives (Liebrucks, 2001).

Complementing the perspective that reality differs for each individual, there is the argument that reality is specific to a given social context and is a collective representation of everybody's knowledge (Berger and Luckmann (1991). The authors' notion guided their conclusion that organisations contain collections of particular knowledge constructed by individuals within them and that no single truth exists. The authors further the discussion and contend that it is this shared knowledge that becomes the rules that steer and define the social context within an organisation. The suggestion is, to understand the reality, it is also required to understand the organisation from a social context as it influences individual's defining the reality (Thorpe and Holt, 2013). The above two discussion points: the social context of an organisation and the outlook of the individuals within it, when united, form the reality that enfolds and defines processes in the organisation. In this capacity, to understand the previous change in Telco Digital Wireless Mobile Landline (DWML), these two perspectives required exploration and interpretation. It would entail interacting with individuals and interpreting how realities were shaped and changed, as stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Gamage and Wickramasinghe (2014) as 'practical knowing'. To gain a better understanding and to learn, I used guiding questions, including 'what does it mean' and 'what is it' (Coghlan Brannick, 2014). Such questions allowed me to appreciate and understand the particular realities of the research participants and interpret the meaning of the assigned reality that assisted in generating learning. The outcome was beneficial to address objective 2 and 3 of the research project. The generated knowledge was context-specific to Telco DWML and individuals within the company. It provided meaning surrounding events and processes related to research participants. The implication of the approach utilised to generate knowledge for this research project was interpretive epistemology (Hassard, 1991). For that reason, the research project was embarked on within the philosophical framework of social constructionism drawing on an interpretive epistemology to generate knowledge of reality.

### 3.2 Action Research Rationalisation

The study was rooted in an action research (AR) framework. AR derives from Lewinian roots. Social scientists, John Collier, Kurt Lewin and William Whyte, researched in the 1940s, and the term action

research was born. During their work, they realised a need for research to be intimately and directly coupled to action if members of organisations were to use it to manage change. Lewin emphasised that the outcome of utilising AR is threefold, (a) organisation members should be able to use research on themselves to steer action and change, (b) social scientists should be able to study a process to develop new knowledge that may be utilised elsewhere, and (c) self-realisation of individuals that change is necessary (Burnes, 2004). Lewin believed that to try and change human systems, means shifting from conventional research modes of inquiry to having those in the human system itself involved and be part of the inquiry process (Coghlan and Brannick 2014; Coghlan and Shani, 2014). This is the bedrock of AR.

The definitions of AR are many. Below is a definition that seizes the fundamental characteristics of AR presented by Shani and Pasmore (1985).

*'Action Research may be defined as an emergent inquiry process in which applied behavioural science knowledge is integrated with existing organizational knowledge and applied to solve real organizational problems. It is simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organizations, in developing self-help competencies in organisational members and in adding to scientific knowledge. Finally, it is an evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry' (p.439).*

AR is instilled in democratic partnerships where researcher and stakeholders work collaboratively and are co-joined in the research process (Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Shani, Coghlan and Cirella, 2012). The purpose is to gain a mutual appreciation of a problem and work with one another to cogenerate relevant knowledge surrounding a problem and take collective action for the betterment of organisational communities (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The process is not strictly limited to learning more of a problem through collaboration and action but also encourages the researcher and participants to learn about themselves through continuous self-inquiry and reflection (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). Following such a process entails both participants and researcher to engage in making a change in the organisation system actively and at the same time continuously advancing knowledge of the business issue during inquiry (Argyris, 1993; Cho and Egan, 2009). In this regard, both entities are immersed in a participative model to try to understand and solve a business issue (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). It is a marked difference when compared to conventional research methodologies where the researcher is disengaged from the process (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). From this perspective, AR is useful when investigations are process-related, change-related and when research is associated with telling stories to help reveal previously taken actions over a particular time within specific groups, organisations or other communities (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

Generic summaries of AR are rare to find (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). It encompasses a nucleus of different approaches working in a wide variety of settings countering that of a specific demarcated approach (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). Embodied within are a manifold of paradigms and methodologies, each of which has its unique prominence, and diverse descent evolved overtime (Adler, Shani and Styhre, 2004; Coghlan, 2010, 2011; Raelin, 2009). However, despite differing approaches, two concurrent activities remain consistent with the researchers perspective. The first to improve work practice by actively engaging in action and the second, simultaneously producing data for research purposes (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). In this circumstance, data is a broader concept comparative to what data embodies from a positivist perspective (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). From this stance, AR characterises a transformative inclination toward the creation of knowledge (Grogan, Donaldson and Simmons, 2007). As such, researchers following this process strive to transport knowledge creation beyond the ingresses of practitioner knowledge architects (Bradbury, 2010).

AR is a way of living in the world, contrasted to a stereotypical research methodology or technique (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). It is a way of life that harbours expression through collaboration and co-inquiry related to an issue deemed to be worthwhile (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). The fruits of this approach are best realised when attempting to study social realities by isolating without disconnecting value from the fact (Riordan, 1995). Three aspects signify AR: (a) action, (b) research and (c) participation (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The action component aims to change a situation within a group, organisation or community towards a self-managing, enlightened freethinking and supportive state. The research element intends to generate new knowledge, and participation, emphasising a democratic approach promoting individuals to seize control and govern life circumstances and conditions (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

Extending from this, the process has three voices and audiences: (a) first, (b) second and (c) third-persons (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). It is a concept developed from Reason and Bradbury's (2008) popular notion of three audiences of research: *'All good research is for me, for us, and for them: it speaks to three audiences'* (p.1). The first-person inquiry is characterised by taking researchers upstream questioning their mode of inquiry and practices related to their underlying assumptions, beliefs, desires, intentions and philosophy of life (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This mode of inquiry can also take the researcher downstream, where the researcher enquires into their behaviour and ways of relating their activities to the world (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). The second-person inquiry focuses on co-inquiry through interviews, conversations, face-to-face dialogue and joint action to address a mutual concern. The third-person inquiry has been the more traditional approach. It creates communities of inquiry beyond that of

the second-person action. It is regarded as impersonal and is symbolised through propagation by publishing, reporting and inferring from the concrete to the general.

As denoted by Coghlan and Brannick (2014), second-person practice is critical. The authors believe a collaborative approach embracing the construction of the project, the planning of action, evaluating action, and learning and reflection (first-person) which is mutually fostered and embraced is where learning takes place. It is through second and first-person experience and learning that can lead to actionable knowledge for the third-person audience. Sensemaking and language in this regard are vital as assumptions are addressed in an open, collaborative manner (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). In this capacity, the scholar-practitioner as an action researcher must harmonise scholarship into practice (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). As a reflective practitioner, one must employ themselves in the science of action and yield useful research (Argyris and Schon, 1974; Mohrman and Lawler, 2011; Schon, 1983). Employing a dual approach with a simultaneous mindset can help address the central research question with scientific rigour (Levin, 2012).

I believed that AR was a suitable framework for this study. As mentioned by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) and Thorpe and Holt (2013), it granted me to tackle a real management issue; the development of implementation strategies to improve organisational change execution. AR is different from general qualitative research in that the latter is built on the past and focuses on knowledge production. However, AR builds from the past while taking place in the present to change the future. In this capacity, I acquired the views and experiences on how the previous change initiative was led and rolled-out in Telco DWML to generate learning and produce actionable solutions that were applied to improve change management execution for the future.

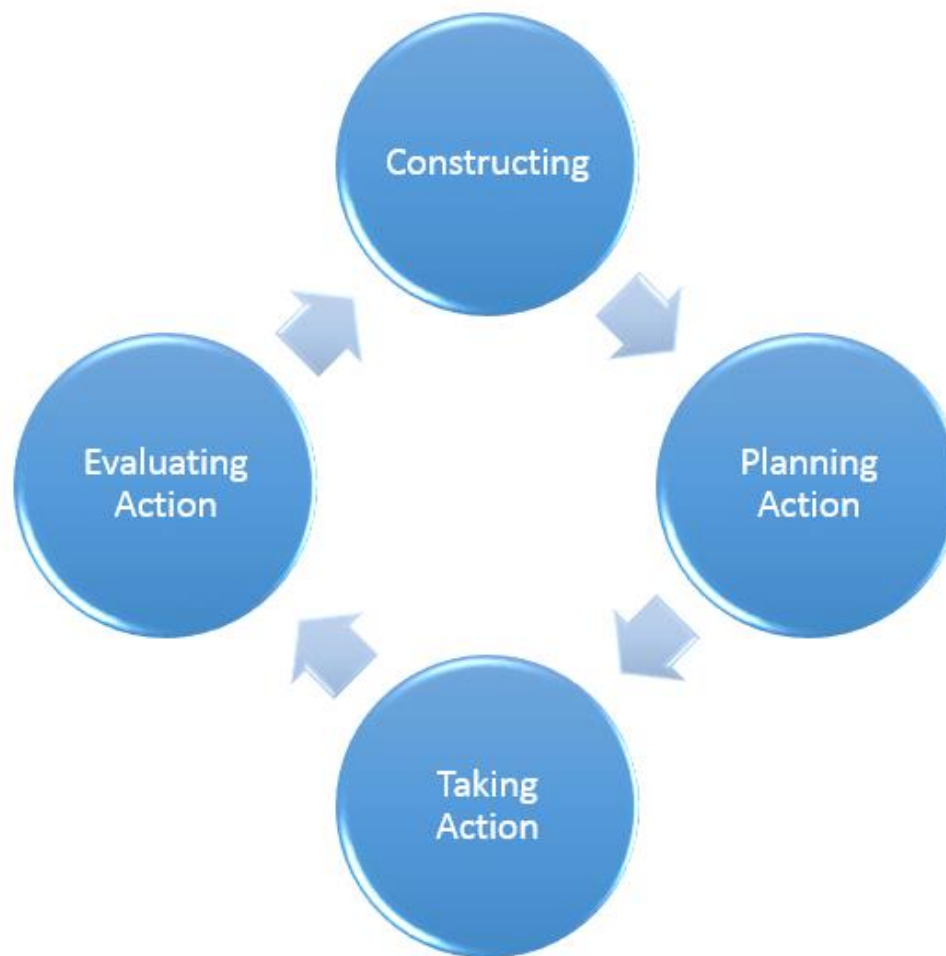
Despite the positive arguments mentioned above, AR is not to everybody's liking. It has been disparaged and criticised by those accustomed to practising more traditional research designs in social science (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). A typical critical theme that continuously emerges is that it lacks rigour and a scientific approach as researchers merely tell stories (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy, 1993). As it is a relatively new phenomenon, denunciation surrounding a lack of prior theorising also exists (Harris, 2008). It is also argued and criticised that the results of the process are context-specific and time-bound. Therefore observations made are only applicable during a particular phenomenon. As a result, formulating a robust theory by a particular intervention in a specific organisation is a common critical point made (Harris, 2008). Also, as investigators who conduct AR in their practice, the issue of researcher bias and the validity of the study has been questioned (Kelly, Davey and Haigh, 2000). The argument is

made based on the proximity between participant and researcher, which can influence the study outcome (Harris, 2008).

I found AR facilitated reflection and reflexivity through journaling to accommodate researcher learning, sensemaking, neutrality and mitigate bias. In this capacity, I had the opportunity to live and experience activities from the participants' perspective and also critique and question my role, position and initial interpretations cyclically and repetitively. I believe there is value in the process as it goes beyond attempting to answer a research question. It helps participant and researcher learn about themselves, of each other and gain a better understanding of the work-based problem.

Figure 2 below, adapted from Coghlan and Brannick (2014), highlights the stages for the research project that were developed based on Lewin's (1947) model of constructing, planning action, taking action and evaluating action. Continuous reflection to articulate alternative meanings and adaption through iterations were incorporated to guide the next stages of the research project.





*Figure 2: AR Cycles Construction, Planning Action, Taking Action and Evaluating Action*

In line with this, I ensured continuous engagement with staff members and management at each stage of the cycle as follows:

1. Constructing – I engaged with senior leaders in Telco DWML to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the issue that management was facing that they wanted to collect practical knowledge on and how best to address it. This stage of the process entailed consultation with the Transformation & Transition Director (TTD) and HR Director (HRD). The advice was to investigate the management and implementation of change concerning its criticality for the company's survival and success. Also, I had initial meetings with my colleagues to ascertain if they could benefit from this research project and whether they thought it would benefit Telco DWML. Accordingly, I engaged with the literature surrounding change management design and

implementation and prepared a proposal for the study that was reviewed by my supervisor. Upon approval, I shared the proposal with the TTD and HRD. Once accepted and informed of their support, I went through the necessary process of receiving clearances and approvals to commence the research project.

2. Planning action – I continued to engage with the literature and develop the conceptual framework. In parallel, I reengaged with senior leaders to assist in the planning of the research, receive clearance to ensure access to research participants that could be used as part of the study sample. It was critical to have leadership support to gain an understanding of their expectations based on their interpretation of what the problem was and how the project may evolve. The engagement with senior leaders was crucial as it is also provided insight into those senior managers from the Change Management Office (CMO) that would be involved in change design and implementation in Telco DWML in the future.
3. Taking action – I connected with research participants to discuss the purpose of the study, highlight expectations from them and the benefits that the research project may provide Telco DWML. I engaged in non-participant observations. I also engaged with non-supervisory staff members through individual semi-structured interviews and engaged with managers through focus group discussions (FGDs). In addition to member checking, the explorative nature of the study allowed me to informally engage with non-supervisory staff and managers outside of the semi-structured interviews and FGDs, respectively. This provided greater context and appreciation of the issues emphasised during semi-structured interviews and FGDs and the value for understanding the criticality of managing and leading change in the future. For example, the importance of communication and leadership was highlighted during interviews, FGDs and informal meetings. Consequently, leadership transpired as the central theme of the research project. I also had a meeting with CMO senior managers, the TTD and HRD to gain further clarity and surrounding initial findings.
4. Evaluating action - Most of the action occurred post data analysis and findings. I planned and organised several meetings with senior management working in the CMO, and the TTD and the HRD. During these meetings, the gathered data from observations, interviews and FGDs were evaluated and validated. These meetings also served as a basis to gather further information and raise awareness. These meeting also acted as a foundation in obtaining their views on the recommendations that I had presented and collectively reflect on the best approach to improve change implementation and to lead and manage change initiatives in Telco DWML.

The process involved frequently reviewing plans, actions and evaluating data and outcomes by participants, my colleagues, academic peers and my research supervisor. Through applied learning, the expectation was that the AR process would support, endorse and offer the prospect of devising a change implementation strategy to improve the success of organisational change execution in Telco DWML

As a researcher, I was responsible for creating a credible plan representative of upholding the integrity of the research project. I believe my scholar-practitioner schooling gave me the confidence and skills to behave for the good of Telco DWML. I was inspired by Bergold and Thomas (2012) and Reason and Bradbury (2008) presentation of participatory inquiry. I found the participatory inquiry approach (Cunliffe, 2010, p.656) to the research project facilitated what Weick (1999) calls '*disciplined reflexivity*' (p.800). It provided clarity, particularly during periods of paradox and contradiction. Participatory inquiry can also help researchers if any ethical issues arise (Craig and Snook, 2014; Vince and Broussine, 1996).

### 3.3 The Inside Action Researcher Role

Adding to the action and collaborative oriented nature of AR, Greenwood and Levin (2007) mention that an inside member of an organisation best undertakes AR. This was fitting for this study as I was a full-time employee of Telco DWML for three years in the CMO, and I was a researcher. Being an insider helped in co-learning and sharing of knowledge to create new understandings and actionable recommendations to help leaders of change. My role was to facilitate the study process by engaging with participants and providing a platform for participants and myself into inquiry and action to enhance our preunderstanding. Being an insider allowed me to have an inside perspective that brought about new knowledge that I feel otherwise would have been challenging to generate. The preunderstanding of the organisation assisted in navigating through political arenas and raising awareness related to the research project and its findings, particularly as I did not have much authority or negotiating power.

Additionally, my preunderstanding helped me identify the working relationships that I had established. This, in turn, helped me discuss with senior leaders about participant selection and identify those involved in the previous change execution. My knowledge of the organisation also helped me appreciate the culture, relationships, emotion, context and language. Understanding the organisational life of Telco DWML or any organisation for that matter takes time and can be otherwise difficult for an external researcher-consultant to grasp (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). Despite the positive aspects of being an inside action researcher, many scholars indicate issues of objectivity (Coghlan and Brannick 2014; Roth, Shani and Leary, 2007). To manage the risk of interference, bias and assumptions, I continuously engaged in self-reflection and journaling. This strategy recommended by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) helped considerably as it required me to stop and question myself throughout the AR process.

Research in action, collaboration, and operating as an inside action researcher established the methodological approach for this research project. As an insider, I spearheaded the study and continuously collaborated and engaged with staff members and management to understand the context of Telco DWML, interpret it to produce knowledge and learning, and provide actionable recommendations to improve change management practices. Combining social constructionism and AR permitted the investigation of change practices through engaging with the people involved in the previous change design and roll-out, and those impacted by it. In this capacity, the sample participants helped make sense of the situation, and Telco DWML benefitted from the study also.

### 3.4 Research Methodology

The goal of a researcher is to choose the correct research methodology for a given line of inquiry to achieve significant and meaningful results (Houghton *et al.*, 2013). Researchers need to select an appropriate methodology to conduct research (Wahyuni, 2012; Yin, 2012). The methodology should be in keeping with the nature of the study (Kourula, 2010). From this perspective, choosing an appropriate research design offers suitable strategies to implement the selected research methodology, and this is crucial to the success of a study (Butt, 2010).

Marais (2012) mentions that researchers should choose a qualitative research methodology to achieve a better comprehension of the phenomenon. Yin (2014) asserts that researchers conduct qualitative research to explore the human aspect and meanings of phenomena in an environment where the research is conducted. A qualitative methodology entails understanding the meaning of experiences in conjunction with enfolded various interpreting procedures in areas of decoding, describing and translating (Hunt, 2011; Sergi and Hallin, 2011). Researchers using a qualitative mode of inquiry utilise expressions, images, stories and other illustrations other than statistical data when exploring a phenomenon (Applebaum, 2012; Marais, 2012). In essence, qualitative research comprises a naturalistic and interpretive approach (Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2006). It facilitates researchers to improve and adapt concepts during inquiry (Tucker, Powell and Meyer 1995). The drive behind employing a qualitative methodology is to explore current and prevailing knowledge to enhance comprehension of a research topic (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014).

In keeping with the first study objective which aimed, to provide first-hand experiences of employees' perspective of the previous change efforts, the impact it had on them and the beliefs they had regarding senior management effectiveness in implementing future change initiatives, I selected a phenomenological case study methodology. Creswell (2013), Moustakas (1994) and Patton (1992) mention that phenomenological case study methodology is designed to allow researchers to understand

the subjective perspectives and lived experiences of participants through an in-depth investigation of a particular event, or an individual over a certain period. Fusing a phenomenological approach with the case study method, allows a researcher to make sense of delicate and convoluted human experiences, and ‘the essence and the underlying structure of a phenomenon’, (Merriam, 2009, p. 23).

Rowley (2012) asserts that a qualitative case study methodology is valuable and is most applicable when the researcher has no authority over policy, process, procedure and participants, but the researcher must analyse real-life situations. The qualitative case study methodology is characterised as exploratory to discover the ‘how’ and ‘why’ and to present an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Cao and Hoffman, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). Generally, the goal of case study research is to acquire data from a real-life environment that illustrate and depict human experiences to attain sound knowledge and comprehension of a phenomenon (Applebaum, 2012; Arghode, 2012; Yin, 2012, 2014). Researchers opt for case study research to analyse individuals, smaller groups of participants, policy, programmes, organisations or events by utilising one or more variety of data (Roberts, 2013; Yin, 2012). From this perspective, case study research concerns itself in forming the foundational topic and constructing concepts that subside to present-day living and literature (Reddy and Agrawal, 2012). It is also valuable to use case study research in natural environments to seek a broader understanding of a topic or experience of importance (Crowe *et al.*, 2011). Case study research can aid a researcher to reflect on participant perspectives and learn how participant views add and guide the direction of the study (Sangster-Gormley, 2013). Moreover, a single case study can generate a significant amount of data (quotations and supportive details) that can help the researcher understand and provide meaning to the complexity of an issue (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Such details are imperative for progressing toward answering the research question related to the topic of research (Barratt, Choi and Li, 2011; Lalor *et al.*, 2013).

For this research project, the case was a bounded system, bounded by time (five months of data collection and analysis) and place (located in a single team at Telco DWML). The unit of analysis for the case study was a single case. Creswell (2013) refers to this as a ‘*within-site study*’ (p.97). The intent was to report a qualitative instrumental case study to explore the work-based problem and to use the single case of one organisation. The case study did not follow what Creswell (2013) refers to as an ‘*intrinsic case study*’ (p.99) as a failure in organisational change execution based on poor implementation strategies has occurred before.

There are concerns surrounding case study research related to the number of cases required to generalise findings and conclusions (Gummesson, 2008). However, this has been countered by (Flyvbjerg, 2006), who mentions that case study research generates context-dependent knowledge-producing experts with

intimate knowledge in their area of expertise. I found following a phenomenological case study methodology to be a long process, producing much information. However, incorporating a systematic approach helped to manage and present the data and prevented the injection of bias views that could otherwise have influenced the direction of the findings and conclusions. Also, according to Gummesson (2008), the concept of '*data generation*' (p.39) is different from data collection. Data generation is more in keeping with case study research, as data is gathered based on crucial indications through symbols, words and action (Gummesson, 2008). Gummesson (2008) also indicates that the object to be investigated is a crucial aspect of guiding an efficacious case study, and incorporating action research as an approach can increase the opportunity for such access to the object of study. In this context, I adopted an action research framework for phenomenological case study research. As an inside action researcher, it presented the opportunity to immerse me as a scholar-practitioner by giving greater access to the object of study, thus provided a platform to make decisions through close engagement.

A phenomenological case study methodology with an action research framework helped devise actionable recommendations to address the central research question(s) and was the chosen conduit for the research topic. The chosen methodology and framework were deemed more suitable than narrative, grounded theory, and ethnography research designs. Tomkins and Eatough (2013) state that exploiting a phenomenological case study methodology permits the researcher to explore the perceived meaning of experiences associated with the known phenomenon and allows the researcher to explore the perceived meaning of experiences within a bounded system. If the study entailed extracting participant perspectives on relationships, a problem and environment through the collection of stories, a narrative research design would be more appropriate (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012). Grounded theory involves developing theory through exactitudes data collection (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012), which steers away from the current research objective. Ethnography is a design that researchers use to map and study the culture of a particular population (Stake, 2013; Vesa and Vaara, 2014). A culture-based research design approach was not an appropriate fit for the current research project. A phenomenological case study methodology and action research approach were deemed the most appropriate to explore behaviour, patterns and meaning.

### 3.5 Population and Sampling

Specifying the exact number of participants in a case study can be a challenge (O'Reilly and Parker, 2013). Interviewing between four and ten participants when executing a qualitative case study methodology is usually sufficient (Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2014). Selecting rich cases provides in-depth comprehension of information related to a phenomenon and can prove crucial when gathering

insights of participant experiences (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Given the scale of the previous change initiative, I needed to select staff members and managers who according to senior leaders, could provide insight, from their perspective, regarding how the previous change was led. With the help of the TTD and HRD, we identified the department managers and their teams. Sampling is a critical process to ensure quality research (Emmel, 2015; Patton, 2015; Robinson, 2014). The objective of sampling is to choose an appropriate sample to determine aspects or issues of an entire population (McCabe, Stern and Dacko, 2013). In research, choosing specific participants connected to the research question in a non-random manner is referred to as purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015; Robinson, 2014). Given the qualitative nature of the study, I felt it was vital to explore perspectives, behaviours and experiences of individuals within the bounds of the environment which could assist in ascertaining information-rich cases (Draper and Sift, 2011; Patton, 1990). The sample design followed two forms of non-probability sampling; purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was elected as a technique to select participants who were best associated with the objective of the study. Purposive sampling can provide researchers with insights and understanding of a phenomenon (McCabe, Stern and Dacko, 2013). Purposive sampling is also used to ensure screened entities meet the inclusion criteria (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012; Merriam, 2009). While the target population for this study were employees from a specific department at Telco DWML, all employees had different roles. Different roles assist in additional sourcing information related to a phenomenon (Bansal and Corley, 2011, 2012; Finlay, 2014; Rubin and Rubin, 2012). All participants for the study were chosen from the 'Mobile' team of Telco DWML, regardless of race, religion, cultural background, ethnicity, education, age or gender. The team is part of the broader Product Development department which is the 'hub' of the organisation. Participants were selected and approached for the study providing they met the following criteria, (a) currently working in the 'Mobile' team of Telco DWML, (b) have experienced a previous change within Telco DWML, and (c) fulfil management or business/technical analyst and business process engineering roles within the 'Mobile' team of Telco DWML. All participants met the inclusion criteria. The study had an initial sample of three manager's and seven non-supervisory participants out of a total population of nineteen employees within the 'Mobile' team. The initial sample of seven non-supervisory participants evolved into nine participants by adopting snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is used to heed data saturation during interviews (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012; Jawale, 2012; Merriam, 2009).

### 3.6 Ethical Consideration

AR as a methodology is grounded in participation, collaboration, freedom, justice, and democracy and such characteristics are foundational ethical considerations of any research on individuals (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). Procedural ethics and ethics in practice are dimensions of ethics in research (Guillemin

and Gillam, 2004). Concerning procedural ethics, an essential part of the process is to protect the anonymity and rights of participants (Rowley, 2012). I found that participant protection helped the trust-building process as it shielded participants from harm throughout a study (Rowley, 2012). It is imperative that research objectives be aligned with institutional regulations, all applicable laws, and practices professional conduct (Antes, 2014). The study did not begin until I went through the formal process to obtain approval from the DBA Research Ethics Committee and approval from Telco DWML.

There is a responsibility on the researcher's part to safeguard the anonymity, confidentiality and consent of participants when analysing participant's implicit and explicit meanings (Antes, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Having informed consent is paramount to highlight the purpose of the study and to identify the roles of participant and researcher (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). As part of the procedural rigour process, I sought authorisation from Telco DWML (see Appendix D). I also obtained individual consent from each participant (see Appendix E) after going through the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix F). To protect participant identity, I enacted to use alphanumeric codes. Participants involved in the interviews and FGDs were labelled in chronological order (P1, P2 and FGDP1, FGDP2) to protect their privacy and anonymity. All information related to the study, both hard and soft copy will remain in a safe for no less than five years. All information will be discarded after five years to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity.

To explain ethics in practice, I needed to be aware of my role as an inside action researcher. Holian and Coghlan (2013) mention that *'insider action research can be seen as subversive and radical, advocating unnecessary change'* (p.412). My role would entail being a member of an organisation undertaking research and some action coupled with my regular functional role with Telco DWML. I learned that an inside action researcher has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages were that I knew the company policies, procedures, processes and organisation members. In this capacity, there was no need for a restructured understanding of the situation, but instead, I could use my capability to extract understanding in use. I was aware of the potential challenges too. For example, already working in the organisation could impact my bias and existing relationships may mean either participants will open up freely or remain closed. Both scenarios could impair the validity, reliability and outcome of the study.

I felt it was my responsibility to safeguard all participants. I assured participants that any contribution made will be treated with the strictest of confidence. I communicated that there is plenty of scope for feedback review sessions for validation purposes, and if participants want, they always have the opportunity to withdraw at any stage. Finally, I proclaimed only with their permission will their contribution be used in the study. Despite communicating this, participants could withdraw from sharing



information and sharing their experiences. If found reciprocity between myself and participants was critical and helped develop honesty and trust, notably as the study encompassed qualitative interpretative qualities. I had set-up meetings with identified participants. The objective was to take the formality of the study out of the equation. I did not want participants to feel 'assessed'. I used this time to highlight the significance of the study and the potential impact it may have. I wanted to provide an avenue for participants to voice any concerns or doubts that they had.

There are limitations in using qualitative methods as the possibility of researcher bias exists (Woodard, 2012). During the research process, it is likely that researchers have certain beliefs and experiences surrounding the research topic, which can promote how they think participants should answer interview questions (Woodard, 2012).

Researchers should make every effort to contain any bias and previously held assumptions and perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Data triangulation and journaling can assist researchers in mitigating bias (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; Creswell, 2013). Following the advice from Creswell (2013), I tried remaining unbiased through sustaining the triangulation of data by utilising different data collection methods and associated protocols. Data collection methods included non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, FGDs and document reviews. According to Bekhet and Zausniewski (2012), themes derived from interviews, non-participant observations and journal entries can confirm data triangulation. The entire process led to reviewing supplementary academic literature which further promoted triangulation and mitigated bias.

In addition to data triangulation, I employed a pragmatic action research approach encapsulating continuous reflection and reflexivity through journaling that helped in managing my bias, my role as a scholar-practitioner and my relationship with participants. I did not voice any personal experiences I had within the organisation during meetings with participants and throughout the research project. As I could relate to the concerns of the participants in the meetings, this could have proved difficult if I did not use journaling. I also continuously attempted to convert the fact I have been working in the organisation to an advantage. I used the situation to truly understand the views of participants by having an empathetic ear and voice. It helped tremendously in building trust. The experience was significant. The result of journaling meant that I could frequently 'check-in' to assess my behaviour. It helped me question my values and remain on an ethical path (Bell and Bryman, 2007). The outcome championed behavioural change in participants and myself. This was displayed through openness and inclusion, leading to higher levels of commitment (Verhezen, 2010, p.190).

### 3.7 Data Collection

Data were collected within the social constructionism framework and interpretive epistemology. The objective was to obtain first-hand experiences of employees' perspective of the previous change efforts, the impact it had on them, and the beliefs they had regarding senior management effectiveness in implementing future change initiatives. Gathering employee perspectives is critical for research when attempting to devise strategies that motivate workers to support and provision change (Alfes *et al.*, 2013). In keeping with a phenomenological case study methodology I conducted semi-structured interviews with non-supervisory staff (see Appendix A) (Connelly, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014) and FGDs with managers (see Appendix V) (Krueger and Casey, 2014) as investigative methods to gather data and primary source information. I had also used non-participant observation (see Appendix B) (Liu and Maitlis, 2010). I found that using three data collection methods reduced the opportunity to fabricate biased data. Utilising multiple sources of data to repetitively label themes confirms saturation and rigour (Emmel, 2015; Houghton *et al.*, 2013). I continued to collect data until no new themes, concepts or keywords emerged. Meetings with senior management and leadership community members also helped ascertain actionable steps.

The primary sources of information were complemented by secondary sources, including reports, emails, leaflets and publicly available documents deemed relevant for the study. The secondary data provided the context within which these changes took place. Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) mentioned that interviews and focus groups are the two most commonly used qualitative data collection methods. These methods permitted the exploration, assessment and meaning surrounding the impact the previous change initiative had on employees. It provided an understanding of how the change was designed, implemented, and ultimately led and managed. The results also provided insight into the beliefs participants had regarding management's capacity to lead future change efforts. It helped me work with senior managers and leaders to devise implementation strategies for change initiatives in Telco DWML and design leadership competencies to facilitate managers to lead change.

#### 3.7.1 Non-Participant Observations

The method of non-participant observation means that the researcher is not actively involved with those that are observed (Liu and Maitlis, 2010). The non-participant observation activity allowed me to try to make sense of the environment in which participants operate. Non-participant observations also allow a researcher to observe the social interaction and behavioural responses that participants have towards tasks and towards one another (Liu and Maitlis, 2010; Merriam, 1998). I thought that this was a viable option to

understand the impact the recent change initiative had on employees in the 'Mobile' team of Telco DWML.

There is no one-way to classify observational data because behaviour is complex, and the intention of studies vary considerably (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). I was somewhat concerned that participants may be subject to the Hawthorne effect. This occurs when people conduct themselves and behave differently when they are aware they are observed (Liu and Maitlis, 2010). This led me to question the potential accuracy of the findings that would emerge. For this reason, and although time-consuming, non-participant observations were conducted before, during and after the semi-structured interviews. Incorporating longevity into the non-participant observation process can validate what a researcher sees as an 'outside observer' (Liu and Maitlis, 2010). I was aware that I would have to maintain an open mind in this process and realised that I should not formulate opinion and judgment. Longevity proved crucial as it allowed me to 'find my feet', time to reduce the 'observer effect', use my senses to articulate a 'written photograph', and try to make sense of the environment and situation.

To help guide and document my observations, I used the three-stage funnel process highlighted by Spradley (1980). Following this process allowed me to structure my observations. The process began by documenting anecdotal observations. This phase allowed me to undertake broad observations. The first phase allowed me to understand the environment better. From this phase, I moved to a more focused phase of observation, where I focused my attention on a more conical set of activities of most interest, such as employee interactions and responses. After, I moved to the third phase called selected observation. During this phase, I explored relationships between the environment and the participants selected for the study. The entire process took more time than I initially thought. However, the longevity not only proved valuable in helping 'get my bearings' and reduce the 'observer effect' but also helped in reaching theoretical saturation. I reached this point when the continued observation was no longer adding value to my understanding of the situation. Liu and Maitlis (2010) mention the timeframe for observation during research can vary from days to years, the length of which is dependent on the phenomenon in question. The authors also highlight that non-participant observation should be used in line with other methods of data collection. I felt the non-participant observation data collection method coupled with semi-structured interviews and FGDs would present me with a nuanced and dynamic understanding of the situation that otherwise may have proved to be problematic to make sense by capturing data utilising a single method.

### 3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative studies provide the versatility to perform interviews and permits utilising techniques to analyse data to help researchers understand a phenomenon (Bansal and Corley, 2011, 2012). Semi-structured interviews are a rare opportunity offering participants the prospect to uncover their experiences through open and honest communication that can prove invaluable towards the comprehension of the research topic (Roulston, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to incorporate an open-ended questioning style. Semi-structured interviews provide a platform for researchers for follow-up inquiry to attain additional accounts and descriptions (Finlay, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). I found that semi-structured interviews created a platform for trust and openness. Participant interviews can assist in trying to make sense of diverse experiences (Roulston, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). The interviews provided the necessary platform to allow participants to communicate their perspectives of the previous change initiative freely and what they feel can be done in the future by leaders to implement change. All interviews were conducted on-site, one-on-one and took place in meeting rooms, on an open floor, lasting 45 to 75 minutes. Participants were introduced to the purpose and objective of the interviews and allowed to express any concerns. Interviews took place in meeting rooms only accessible by the researcher and the interviewee.

To prepare for the semi-structured interviews, I reviewed the literature on how best to apply interviews to case studies. Creswell (2013) and Asmussen and Creswell (1995) helped to guide and to gear me towards conducting semi-structured interviews. According to Dworkin (2012) and Nirupama and Etkin (2012), utilising semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions encourages participants to reveal profound accounts of their experiences, which is recommended for rigorous and scrupulous research. The interview questions (see Appendix A) provided a higher degree of confidentiality, permitting personal interviewee responses. I articulated the interview questions which were validated by my supervisor and internally by the TTD and HD. To facilitate informality and freedom of expression, I did not always go through the questions from top to bottom but still maintained the focal research question(s) presented in section 1.5 in mind.

### 3.7.3 Focus Group Discussions

FGD is a technique that a researcher uses to gather people to converse around a particular topic drawing on experiences, perceptions, beliefs, values and attitudes from participants through mediated interactions (Nyumba *et al.*, 2017). It is a qualitative data collection approach that has gained popularity and is strongly tied to participatory research (Morgan, 2002). FGDs can be used to complement data collected after semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations (Krueger and Casey, 2014). It is a

technique that links local knowledge with scientific research (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). FGDs are frequently used in action research (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). It is a cost-effective and time-efficient technique used to generate complex information that promptly provides results (Kroll, Barbour and Harris, 2007). FGDs provide a platform that facilitates differing worldviews and paradigms (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

The optimal size of a focus group is usually between four and ten participants (Bloor *et al.*, 2001; Krueger and Casey, 2014). I employed a purposive approach when selecting participants for the FGDs. A purposive approach is critical as it facilitates selecting key stakeholders, representative of an informed group related to the work-based problem (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012; Patton, 2002). There should be enough focus group sessions for a researcher to reach group data saturation, i.e. the researcher continues to a point where no new information is received (Krueger and Casey 2014; Sandelowski, 2008; Wilkinson, 2004).

There are many types of focus groups. Following the guidance of Krueger and Casey (2014), Nyumba *et al.* (2017) and Wilkinson (1998), I facilitated three semi-structured onsite mini focus group sessions consisting of three participants in an informal setting. Participants included three middle-managers from 'Mobile'. Each session lasted about two hours until group saturation was reached.

I had also used the guidance of Krueger and Casey (2014) to assist in conducting and documenting the FGDs. It is recommended for researchers to prepare open-ended questions before embarking on FGDs (Krueger and Casey, 2014). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012) recommend researchers use a topic guide to steer conversations (p.133). I designed open-ended questions (see Appendix V) that helped to add structure as I documented information, ideas and suggestions to present findings. I articulated the questions which were validated by my supervisor and internally by the TTD and HD. This was critical for me as it assisted in adding structure, clarity, consistency and provided a platform for me to transcribe my thoughts and discussion points deemed relevant by the group.

The questions to prepare for the FGDs centred around the previous approach to change at Telco DWML. The application of methods, roles played during the previous change initiative, models and methodologies of change utilised, the impact the previous change initiative had on current processes and roles, and if anything would be done differently for future change efforts were topics that helped formulate FGD questions. Stakeholder contributions were paramount, and participants were urged to express freely and openly to help generate new ideas that could add value to the existing data that was collected. While the focus was on past events and how things may have gone wrong, I also wanted participants to see to the

future and realise how their contributions could positively shape how change could be rolled-out going forward.

Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) and Bushe (2012) suggest appreciative enquiry to help guide the conversation as it can increase positive feelings and positive talk ratio (Bushe, 2007, p.33). I found it entailed taking on the role of a facilitator, sitting on the peripherals to collect and understand data through moderating a dialogue between the participants without controlling the dynamics of the discussion to help guide the next phase of the research. When reviewing the literature on FGDs, a quote that still resonates with me is *'We can't ignore problems, we just need to approach them from the other side'* (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2001, p.613). It provided context and assisted me to continue to try to draw out as much information to help for the greater good. The focus group sessions promoted more content and context for further evaluation. The FGDs helped streamline the next steps of the research project and assisted in directing the plan to identify strategies that could be used to improve change implementation at Telco DWML.

#### 3.7.4 Document Review

I had undertaken a desk review of Telco DWML's publicly disclosed documents and publications to gain a better understanding and the context for which the previous change initiative was rolled out, the results of the initiative and to understand the proposed change initiative better. The documents I reviewed were given to me by the HRD. Reviewing the documents enhanced my understanding and knowledge and provided further context.

#### 3.7.5 Member Checking and Data Saturation

Member checking is a technique used to enhance the relevancy and accuracy of participant member' intended meaning while attaining the highest level of validity and reliability (Walker and McNamara, 2013). It is a process used by researchers to allow participants to confirm the researchers' interpretation to authenticate alignment with the intended meaning of participant responses (Amerson, 2011). While there can be interpretation issues during member checking, overall, the process enhances trustworthiness (Barusch, Gringeri and George, 2011). Member checking also ensures data saturation as the researcher carries out additional interviews or meetings with participants to authenticate the accuracy of interpretations based on participant responses and to confirm no new information transpires (Dworkin, 2012; Houghton *et al.*, 2013; Walker, 2012). Both member checking and data saturation are methods utilised to fuse and fortify the trustworthiness of findings and promote academic rigour that follows a qualitative line of inquiry (Barusch, Gringeri and George, 2011; Walker and McNamara, 2013). Data

saturation is signified as the point when there is no new information from participant responses after further interviews or meetings, and as a result, information reaches a stage of repetition (Dworkin, 2012).

I integrated member checking as part of the data collection process. I continued to collect data until no new themes emerged, and there were cycles of repetition. Immediately after each of the interviews and FGDs, I wrote down a one or two-page interpretation summary. There was a concern that my interpretations would not align with participant meaning and responses. I shared my interpretations in follow-up meetings for validation. Member checking allowed participants to evaluate interpretations and helped to maintain accuracy. I found participants to be more relaxed in the follow-up meetings, persuasively expressing themselves more openly during the member checking activity. All participants concurred that the interpretations were truthful and correctly reflected their responses and intended meaning. The member checking process thus helped in procuring new insights and further clarification of themes from interviews and FGDs and assisted in achieving data saturation. I felt member checking was essential to ensure research validity, as, during interviews and FGDs, participants may have only revealed high-level information. All participants validated interpretations to be truthful and accurate. Each participant provided further accounts and descriptions related to common themes and concepts that arose during interviews and FGDs. Repeatedly circling back in reflection helped make sense and link concerns to attain validity of findings. The process helped in defining the next actionable steps in the research project.

### 3.8 Data Coding and Analysis

To identify emergent themes, researchers collect, organise, analyse and interpret data (Chikweche and Fletcher, 2012). Coding is a necessary process to help researchers organise data from transcribed interview questions and observations (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). The purpose of coding is to produce themes that arise from the data collected (Da Mota-Pedrosa, Naslund and Jasmand, 2012). For this study, I initially assessed different coding approaches. There are many different coding approaches, including, conventional, summative and directed (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Saldana, 2012). I felt assessing the different approaches was necessary as I had not done anything like this before. Having academic supervisory support helped considerably. However, I still needed to educate myself about the coding process as I wanted to ensure the approach I took was relevant and met the appropriate levels of rigour for the research project.

As I reflected on this further, I found I continuously asked myself three questions, ‘What am I looking to get out of the data?’, ‘What will I need to do most with the data?’, and ‘In what format will the data be to

analyse it?'. Keeping these questions in mind assisted me later in maintaining alignment throughout the coding and analysis process.

I had used template analysis to try to make sense of the qualitative data that was collected. King (1998) and Thorpe and Holt (2013) mention that the template analysis technique thematically permits the structuring of data using codes to label text extracts. I reminded myself that the purpose of analysing the entire data set was to interpret the data that was gathered to reconstruct the context related to participant insights of previous change initiatives initiated by leaders at Telco DWML, the impact the previous change had on participants and participants' perspectives related to management capability to roll-out future change efforts. Accordingly, I developed a coding 'template'. The data was gathered, divided and categorised into the template. Codes were defined a priori and characterised the main themes of the research framework of the study, which included participation and involvement, training and development, leadership, and communication. Also, subset codes representative as enabling factors of the framework included leadership vision, leadership behaviour, resistance to change and readiness to change. The subset codes were deemed critical factors for future change implementation. When data was collected in the beginning, there was uncertainty as to whether the subset should be treated as separate codes, or as sub-codes of principal codes, that was assessed at the initial stages of analysis.

The data analysis process included repeatedly and carefully reading over the content. As I went through the data set, I began to jot down ideas as I tried to identify how to categorise its relevance to the developed code template. I had coded each segment of data pertinent to or data that portrayed something significant. If aspects of data related to priori themes, the data was coded accordingly.

During semi-structured interviews, FGDs and non-participant observation data collection stages, I also took notes of interactions, mannerisms, sentiment and emotions of participants in my journal. I coded the keywords that I captured in my journal to assist in providing further perspective and insight. In this context, I wanted to identify common patterns and views, experiences, and understand what lessons were learnt to help future change implementation. The process proved vital when validating the accuracy of data and when trying to make sense of the data. The attitudes and non-verbal forms of communication were a crucial component to depict the essence of the collected data and for interpreting findings. This provided essential information linked to a specific theme of the study, allowing to assign a given section to a specific code in the template. There were instances where quotes supported two or more themes. In such instances, quotes were included in both codes. For example, the quote below from P9 during the semi-structured interview was allocated to three codes: participation and involvement, communication, and training and development.



*“What you see here in ‘Mobile’ are a group of people that have worked in different parts of the company with different expertise. Before the previous change, some of us were in positions that required decision-making, and we were encouraged to do so. Now that has been taken away from us. The whole change was managed poorly. Many were let go, and we were never really in the loop regarding the previous change and future shifts, and now with the new technology change coming, some things will be automated, and we do not know the impact that it is going to have on our jobs. Will, we be here or do we require training?”*

The above quote is relevant as it demonstrates decision-making authority has been taken away (participation and involvement); there was also uncertainty with the previous change and what the future holds (communication); and the impact of future technology automation on performing current jobs (training and development).

There were cases when data did not always fit, in which case I created new codes and added them as a separate code to the template or as sub-codes of an existing code, leading to a hierarchical code structure (Thorpe and Holt, 2013). During the process of designating data to different codes, I realised the theme of communication was brought up several times in interviews and FGDs. The code template that was initially created had communication as a sub-code of participation and involvement, and leadership. However, interviews and FGDs highlighted it as a critical success factor of change initiatives in the context of Telco DWML. Consequently, communication became a new separate code during the first round of analysis. During the final stages of data analysis, there was data that was not considered to have specific value regarding the success of change implementation strategies for change initiatives or data was representative of information repeated and previously recorded in other codes. In such instances, data was reallocated and analysed as part of other codes.

Also, while undertaking data analysis, three new sub-codes were created: as part of participation and involvement, trust in management was incorporated as a sub-code; as part of leadership, decision making and collective leadership were included as sub-codes. These sub-themes were not sufficiently mirrored in the academic literature that was reviewed as aspects that may considerably impact change design and implementation success; however, these were elements expressed by study participants as distinctive areas in Telco DWML changes that affected how previous change initiatives were managed and led. For example, inadequate non-supervisory staff member trust in management stemming from a lack of participation and involvement in the previous change initiative, may significantly impact their levels of participation and change support surrounding future change initiatives and provide a reason for non-supervisory staff to be cautious when engaging with management resulting in reduced responses to management requests, as indicated by participants during interviews. As this was connected to non-supervisory staff members and their level of participation in previous change initiatives, workforce trust

as a theme was incorporated as a sub-code of the primary code participation and involvement. For easy reference purposes, the new code and sub-codes placed in the template when analysing the data were written in *Italics* in the template. The final version of the code template is presented in Appendix I.

Braun and Clarke (2013) and King (1988) suggested that researchers may use Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) for coding and analysis of data. I felt a considerable amount of time and effort was required in learning and familiarising myself with new software that I may not use in future work. Also, the study sample was relatively small, and I also feared that the systematic nature of CAQDAS would isolate me from the coding and analysis process and results. For these reasons, I used a manual approach and tools such as print outs and post-its, and Microsoft Office tools.

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I had modified the template many times. As I reviewed the data further, more trends, links and repetition of words were becoming evident. It resulted in many codes. Further categorisation and interpretation of the data lead to a reduction in codes and code themes. As I moved forward through the process, I captured new data and gained further insight. I was able to relate themes to the context of the research question(s). Connections and relationships became more evident as the coding and analysis continued. The process took a considerable amount of time. I had coded all transcripts to the template for interpretation of the data set and write-up of findings. There was a total of 33 MS Word pages of data that was coded that represented the entire total data set for analysis.

During this time, I sometimes felt I was losing sight of why I was doing this. Repeatedly I reflected on the questions I asked of myself before engaging in the data collection process. Through reflections, I was reminded to view the data from the perspective of the participants. I was also reminded by my supervisor that the conceptual framework should sit on my shoulders throughout the entire thesis. In this capacity, I was beginning to appreciate how the conceptual framework would be the glue that binds literature, methodology and results to the theoretical foundation of the study. My objective was to advance unbiased conclusions that would enhance rigour and represent accurate, reliable and valid results.

### 3.9 Action in Action Research

Addressing the action component of the research study was a critical process to tackle objective 2 and 3 of the research project in Telco DWML. This occurred in parallel to the research component. The purpose of the action component was to produce practical, actionable suggestions through the development of strategies for the implementation of change initiatives and to ascertain and develop the required leadership behavioural competencies related to the actionable recommendation, i.e. management qualities

required to lead and manage change. Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) stages of the AR cycle (Figure 2) constructing, planning action, taking action and evaluating action was followed.

1. Constructing – I engaged with senior leaders in Telco DWML, offering my research as a platform to attain new knowledge surrounding a management issue. We exchanged ideas, concepts and experiences of change management in the context of the organisation, what was known and if there was something that they would like to know. During the discussion, I was informed that at its core, Telco DWML was interested in improving change management implementation and as a secondary priority, try to decipher what management qualities are required to lead and manage change.
2. Planning action – After receiving approval related to the concept of the research project, I re-engaged with the senior leaders to select research participants that could contribute to the study. My role meant I had an inadequate view of management involvement in the previous change initiative, so obtaining recommendations from senior leaders of the 'Mobile' team, including non-supervisory staff members and managers based on their experiences of the previous change that could contribute to the study, and managers from the CMO that will be involved in change implementation in Telco DWML in the future was paramount.
3. Taking action – I engaged and connected with the research participants of the 'Mobile' team that confirmed their inclination and enthusiasm to contribute to the study. Preliminary meetings were conducted to explain the objectives of the research project, to provide reassurance surrounding anonymity and confidentiality of data, and to clarify respective and expected contributions to the research project. Subsequently, I engaged in non-participant observations, held a total of 9 semi-structured interviews and 3 FGDs.
4. Evaluating action – During the data analysis stage, I had informally re-engaged with the two senior managers working in the CMO and with the TTD and the HRD to inform them of the findings. The formal meetings that followed provided a platform for collective reflection based on the findings and assisted in defining the areas based on my initial recommendations that needed attention to developing actionable recommendations to improve strategic change implementation and to develop the required leadership competencies related to the actionable recommendations, i.e. management qualities required to lead and manage change. I had used interactive feedback sessions (Berryman, 1989) to present findings and recommendations and to seek opinions and validation. The stakeholders in the meetings were vital, as they were the primary decision-makers related to the objectives of the study. The meetings were with two senior managers from the CMO and two senior leaders, the TTD and HRD. There were four meetings that all stakeholders

were present at the same time. There were five separate meetings with the TTD and HRD. There were three separate meetings with the two senior managers from the CMO. There were a total of twelve meetings. Due to work schedules, all meetings could not be combined. During the first formal meeting, I had allocated 20 minutes to present a summary of findings and initial recommendations. The discussions within the meetings led to identifying:

- 1) Actionable recommendations to improve change implementation and,
- 2) Leadership competencies to lead and manage change.

### 3.10 Summary and Transition

In this chapter, I have given an account of the methodology for this research project. It was carried out under the philosophical framework of social constructionism utilising interpretive epistemology for knowledge generation. I selected the AR framework for the study as the characteristics facilitate broader learning, addressing a management issue and producing actionable solutions through collaboration. I have showcased that AR also accommodates a practicality component that extends and works in parallel to theory. The phenomenological case study methodology allowed me to gather knowledge from the employees perspective operating in the firm. It allowed me to broaden my initial understanding and appreciate the impact of the previous change initiative through non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews and FGDs. The interviews and FGDs provided a platform to reconstruct participants' realities. Member checking was used to validate my interpretations. Data was collected and analysed using template analysis. During this time, I continuously reflected on the knowledge gathered, the process in which it was gathered and the influence I may have on the research project. The findings were presented to senior management in the CMO and senior leaders, the TTD and HRD for validation and to adopt actions. The following chapter presents the data gathered during non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews and FGDs and its analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present the collected analysed data from non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). It served as the primary source of data. I had used template analysis to try to make sense of the data that was collected. In addition to the quotes used in this theme, a sample of raw data can also be found in Appendix I. Telco Digital Wireless Mobile Landline (DWML) documents were reviewed also. It served as a secondary source of data. Non-participant observations were conducted before, during and after the semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were with nine non-supervisory staff members. FGDs were with three managers. All research participants were part of the 'Mobile' team. The purpose of primary data collection was to obtain first-hand experiences of employees' perspective of the previous change efforts, the impact it had on them, and the beliefs they had regarding senior management effectiveness in implementing future change initiatives. The secondary data provided the context within which these changes took place. The overall aim was to develop actionable recommendations to improve change management implementation for future change initiatives and to develop the required leadership and behavioural competencies related to the actionable recommendation, i.e. leadership and management qualities required to lead and manage change.

Four prominent themes emerged from the data. The themes were communication, participation and involvement, learning and development, and leadership. The sections that follow are structured around pertinent discussion points related to key themes and additional information recognised as enabling factors as suggested by the academic literature, such as patterns of communication and consideration for employee attitudes towards change. Such topics are presented with relevant themes when considered to improve the success of strategic change implementation. The data from semi-structured interviews and FGDs were organised in a single file. For ease of reference, key messages were divided and selected by central research themes and sub-themes. The quotes presented from interviews and FGDs are used to highlight the research participant's opinion on the previous change initiative, which assisted in defining actionable recommendations. The selected quotes are representative of both shared and conflicting opinions of non-supervisory staff and managers demonstrating senior leaderships' intentions and actions and how leadership decisions impacted the research participants.

### **4.2 Communication**

Communication was included in the research framework as a critical success factor as the reviewed academic literature considered it to support each theme of the change implementation process: leadership

participation and involvement, training and development and others. Communication was the most recurrent sub-theme of the four other themes of the initial code template. Questions on communication were included in interview templates for semi-structured interviews and FGDs. Questions centred on communication intended to understand change-related communication strategy, techniques, key messages and channels, the instruments, methods and process of forward and backward communication used by Telco DWML senior leaders during the previous change initiative and draw learning and recommendations on how to enrich communication in change management in Telco DWML.

During interviews and FGDs, the topic of communication generated meaningful discussions. It was evident that non-supervisory participants and managers had a united opinion surrounding the criticality of communication for change initiatives to be successful and that it is an important component of management function. Research participants provided many insights based on their previous experiences that demonstrated the role communication should play regarding future change design and implementation at Telco DWML and was added to the research framework as a theme in its own right and as a stand-alone theme in the code template. The reason for this was the emphasis and influence communication has on change success rates compared to the initially assumed influence on certain aspects of the entire change process. Communication was also given the status of theme as it had its own success factors, such as processes and structures that could help to devise strategies for change implementation at Telco DWML. Additionally, in keeping with the research element of making solid actionable recommendations for Telco DWML, research participants were asked to classify three communication channels deemed important from their perspective that might have helped in the past and/or could help in the future to disseminate and absorb information better. Also, research participants were asked to provide potential recommendations to improve the communication process overall in Telco DWML.

#### 4.2.1 Communication in Telco DWML Change Management

The semi-structured interviews and FGDs revealed a common understanding surrounding the value and significance of communication. Certain managers pointed out:

*“Communication plays a critical role.” (FGP2)*

*“Communication must be a constant if change is to work.” (FGP1)*

Stakeholders in the FGDs explained communication was sparse throughout the previous change initiative and that they were not fully aware of what was happening.

*“Communication during the previous change initiative was practically none existent. I think we need to be careful about going forward and not go to the other extreme. What also needs to be considered is what information to communicate to who and when.” (FGDP3)*

What this demonstrates is the recognition of having an appropriate communication strategy that demonstrates a balance between too much and too little information that should be communicated in terms of, what to communicate to who and when to communicate. A survey conducted by Telco DWML after the previous change initiative underscored several problems, of which some were ascribed to a lack of communication to the workforce. Since the survey, there were some strides taken to tackle the problem whereby a dedicated working group was to be set-up to better communicate changes in Telco DWML moving forward. The idea was for the individuals in this group consisting of managers from different functional units within Telco DWML to formulate a communication strategy in a participatory manner with the aid of external consultancy services. However, as recollected by one of the managers in the FGDs it had not materialised due to a financial disagreement with the external party. As a result, there is a chance communications for the newly announced change initiative may not be properly managed and as a consequence, there can be uncertainty amongst managers surrounding the information that should be communicated. For example, FGDP3 mentioned in the context of the previous change initiative

*“We were not sure what we could communicate during the previous change process. This impacted levels of trust our teams had in us as managers. If we said all will be ok, they would never believe us.”*

In this capacity, the management was cautious about what they communicated and withheld information particularly surrounding HR related matters. The purpose of not communicating pieces of information was to avoid ambiguity. But it resulted in team members feeling uninformed, creating an environment of speculation and ultimately feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. Consequently, team members held the perception that managers were withdrawn and withheld information to support their respective agendas.

What this highlights is that Telco DWML senior leaders perhaps did not consider communication as an important aspect of change implementation. The result was team members were left questioning management with respect to their intentions, causing ambiguity, dissatisfaction, questioning job security and impacted levels of trust. It is in this light, based on this experience, senior leaders recognised that they had not done a good enough job in communicating to the workforce and wanted to improve.

#### 4.2.2 Messages

There are many variations in the messages from senior management with respect to the previous change initiative. For example, P2 recollects a message, “Get ready for change.” The generic nature of the message informs staff that something is going to change, but to what capacity was unknown, causing fear and leaping into the darkness. Without explanation, the reaction from the workforce was negative. P3 remembered,

*“Communication was not transparent. We knew something was going to happen, but we didn’t know why and asking our managers was pointless. We never received clear answers.”*

This certainly demonstrates that staff did not receive clarification that resulted in further distancing from their managers and the change process. It can be argued that managers withheld information to contain unnecessary panic, however, the result was a negative impact on team members. As P2 mentioned,

*“Perhaps a townhall session with senior leaders would have provided some clarity and reassurance.”*

This demonstrates that sessions such as townhalls steered by senior leaders can shed light, potentially manage expectations resulting in psychological safety. As mentioned by research participants, the consequence of not having a townhall type session resulted in team members and managers lack of trust in Telco DWML leaders. While the intention of the message from senior leaders “Get ready for change”, may genuinely have been formulated to show honesty and openness, in the context of Telco DWML, it caused insecurity and inflated anxiety.

After reviewing the messages utilised by senior leaders to inform the workforce about changes in the context of the previous change initiative, there was a lot of variation and messages were generic providing insufficient clarity and guidance to the workforce. It may well be that the messages never intended to provide clarity, but rather to gain employee buy-in and act as a catalyst for employee motivation towards change. However, the absence of a change implementation strategy meant that consideration for providing clarity was missed. Telco DWML’s situation contributed to low employee morale and reduced employee buy-in through heightened ambiguity raised from unclear messages about the previous change. There are lessons to be learned from this, in that messages need to be well articulated to grasp the attention of workforce members; messages should be informative providing direction of planned changes and should be communicated as widely throughout an organisation as possible.



#### 4.2.3 Pathway

The style of communication in Telco DWML as mentioned by managers in the FGDs is hierarchical with information passing in a top-down manner. FGDP3 described it as follows,

*“In Telco DWML communication is hierarchical, coming from CEO through to directors and then to management meetings which occur weekly. Information was not passed to other staff members directly. As a manager, it was not clear what could be communicated to our team.”*

The above quote indicates the layers of information flows in Telco DWML. The focus, based on the quote is referring to verbal communication. Managers in the FGDs mentioned that information was given to them in weekly meetings. However, they felt that other events should have been organised, such as stand-up breakfasts with directors to have informal information sharing related to the change process. FGD participants mentioned that informal sessions would provide another pathway for directors to share information to boost manager confidence. As FGDP1 recalled,

*“I had asked for informal sessions, but the response I received from my manager was that they’re all too busy and do not have the time.”*

Some participants from the semi-structured interviews mentioned that their managers should be the focal point and main source of information.

*“We need to have open channels of communication with our managers. We did not have regular meetings to inform us of the details of what was going on, not even at a high level.”*

Team members in ‘Mobile’ believed that their managers kept information to themselves believing that knowledge is power and that managers would only share information with a certain few individuals on a need-to-know basis. There were other reasons for managers not to share information with team members according to some of the non-supervisory staff from ‘mobile’. Some believed it depended on the character and personality of their managers, whether the managers had bought into the proposed change, as well as the sub-culture of departments. Some of the team members clarified that some departments have an open culture where directors were more people-focused, had frequent communication with managers who then passed information on to the rest of the team. However, there were other departments like ‘Mobile’ where information was not shared as directors did not support the changes and therefore did not inform staff of any changes.

This suggests that in Telco DWML examples of efficient communication do exist and information reached staff from directors. However, there were instances that information did not reach team members in a department. As FGDP2 mentioned,

*“It would have helped considerably if directors passed information to us, then we would trickle the information down to our teams, but there seems to have been some resistance amongst certain directors, which ultimately led to our teams being resistant to us.”*

This demonstrates that directors were recognised by both managers and team members as important components of the chain of information flow from managers to team members, but in Telco DWMLs' case, this link was not consistent in all departments.

All FGD participants had a common opinion surrounding the importance of director meetings to be an appropriate channel to inform managers of changes. The participants in the FGDs also mentioned that this channel was not appropriately used during the previous change initiative. The suggestion from the FGDs was director meetings should be organised by directors with managers participating on an ad-hoc basis. Sharing information with managers was highlighted as an important aspect of knowledge sharing and knowledge contribution during change. What the FGDs demonstrated was the recognition around the importance of director meetings and how it can be an efficient instrument for Telco DWML to inform managers. As suggested during the FGDs, to be part of director meetings would demonstrate openness and encourage managers to share opinions, give comments and suggestions. It would also be a perfect platform for feedback on changes and not just a session to inform staff, as mentioned by FGDP2,

*“To be part of regular director meetings in the future would be an efficient way for the directors to communicate key messages, and give us an opportunity to voice our suggestions and knowledge consistently. I believe, to be able to this at that management level would be very beneficial.”*

Such meetings represent the foundation for forward and backward communication in Telco DWML changes. Forward communication would entail the chain of information to be passed from directors to team members. The FGDs revealed that feedback between their teams and them, and from them to directors should be collected. As P4 mentioned,

*“There need to be feedback sessions to inform us and for us to provide our suggestions too, to our managers.”*

Responses from team members in 'Mobile' indicated the lack of feedback mechanisms put in place during the previous. Observations and responses also indicated the lack of feedback mechanisms in place for future change initiatives. It was not clear how director messages were passed to team members. However, in some other teams as mentioned by P5 and P7, the relationship with managers and directors was strong and team members' feedback was given to directors through their managers for both previous and upcoming Telco DWML changes.

The data highlights that middle management play a crucial role in linking forward and backward chain of communication. In areas outside of the 'Mobile' team as indicated by some of the participant's communication from directors through to team members was effective. It was also indicated that this channel was not always effective and depended on the personality of a director and how much they had bought into the change. The data also suggested that feedback mechanisms are important according to non-supervisory participants and managers and that there was a lack of a structured feedback pathway during the time of the previous change and at present for future change.

#### 4.2.4 Other Channels of Communication

As mentioned by research participants during interviews and FGDs, going forward there is a need to have various channels of communication, with a recognition that individuals absorb information in different ways and senior leaders' role in this capacity is to ensure that an appropriate platform and style of communication should be used to facilitate such differences. There was also a recognition from managers in the FGDs that they should also be aware of their communication style and how information is passed.

Townhall sessions were frequently mentioned during interviews and FGDs. Participants believed townhall sessions would be beneficial going forward to inform the organisation about changes and would enhance interactions between the workforce and senior leaders. However as mentioned by P7,

*"There is no guarantee that we will be heard at a townhall. Usually, you have to put your hand up, and given a mic and you ask a question. The responses can be quite vague, so I do not really agree with that approach. I would prefer to have feedback sessions with my managers, at a team level."*

The data also highlights that managers in 'Mobile' are aligned with the team they manage, as FGDP2 mentioned,

*"Townhall sessions are great for sharing information, but not for discussion."*

The above comments suggest official gatherings like townhalls are good channels to inform staff directly but require rethinking on how best to engage staff in discussion and how best to obtain their opinion.

Another channel of communication that was brought up during interviews and FGDs was written communication. Research participants referred to information circulars and CEO bulletins as official documentation to inform the workforce about changes. This form of written communication was well received, and employees in 'Mobile' considered the communication as the information they could trust and was vital in receiving reliable information about changes. However, interviewees also suggested documents with more detail would be helpful and should also be posted on the Telco DWML intranet and sent to employees by e-mail in the future. For example, as suggested by team members in 'Mobile', posting minutes of senior management meetings would help staff understand ongoing issues, processes and decisions made. What this suggests is that staff were happy with the written communications, but feel it could have been complemented and should consider the suggestions for the future.

Research participants also mentioned that blogs on the company intranet were used during the previous change initiative. The blog platform allowed managers and staff to write about different events and issues. Responses from managers and team members in 'Mobile' suggested that they did not read the blogs. The overall opinion was that blogs were not considered to be an efficient channel for communication within the Telco DWML context. As FGDP1 mentioned,

*"The blogging idea was not the best. Hardly anybody used it. Perhaps a few comments were posted. But there was no real engagement, and the fear was that if you challenged an idea, you would be categorised as a resistor. I think blogging is could, but it really depends on the context."*

Another suggestion provided by non-supervisory participants to enhance communication in the future would be to have a dedicated committee of HR representatives for departments or teams within a department. The purpose of the HR representatives would be to retrieve information from senior leaders, such as the Human Resource Director (HRD) regarding ongoing changes and to provide feedback and comments on changes. The second purpose of the HR representatives would be to pass information to the teams they are dedicated to and to receive feedback and comments from a given team that they can bring to the HRD.

Managers in the FGDs had a joint consensus regarding informal channels of communication in Telco DWML. Among the suggestions was to have an informal exchange in the cafeteria with senior leaders. For example, FGDP1 mentioned,

*"I think having informal channels of information exchange would work very well in our company. You never know what you will hear, and what will be discussed. As managers the informal set-up would allow us to catch-up and get up to speed on developments we may have missed."*

The comment and consensus by managers during FGDs suggests that two-way interaction with senior leaders could provide an opportunity to share their feedback in a more relaxed environment and culture.

The comments made by non-supervisory staff and managers of 'Mobile' highlight that Telco DWML can do more to improve verbal and written communication regarding future change initiatives. Some of the channels suggested could be used only to share information, while others can be used to have an effective discussion and stimulate feedback. The most pronounced channels of communication brought up during interviews and FGDs were townhall sessions, written communication and intranet. The findings suggest a communications channel that could stimulate staff feedback and discussion would be a committee with dedicated HR representatives that can share information surrounding major changes to team members and departments, as well as introducing an informal format between managers and senior leaders to discuss business issues.

#### 4.3 Summary of Communication and Initial Recommendations

The section on communication reviewed how change was communicated during the previous change initiative in terms of the techniques and channels used by Telco DWML to inform the workforce and to decipher if feedback mechanisms were in place. The data suggested that change-related communication was limited, perhaps due to the lack of emphasis placed on communication when implementing change by senior leaders or as suggested by managers in the FGDs, not knowing what information to communicate. In a survey conducted by Telco DWML post previous change initiative, communication became a central area of concern to be addressed in a change management context in Telco DWML. Both non-supervisory participants and managers from 'Mobile' shared the belief surrounding the criticality of communication during times of change and that various channels of communication should be considered by the company and acknowledge that different channels offer information to be processed and absorbed by different people. This led research participants to the belief that senior leaders in Telco DWML could do more in terms of communication-related to future changes.

During interviews and FGDs, it was found that the communication pathway mirrored the hierarchical management structure within Telco DWML. The interviews and FGDs described how information was passed from director to managers and then to team members in other departments. However, in the context of 'Mobile', there was not an established link, therefore information did not always reach non-

supervisory staff members. What became apparent during the interviews was that some directors did not approve of the proposed changes and therefore did not see the need to communicate anything to their direct reports. In addition, the financial disagreement with the external company that was going to assist Telco DWML in change implementation meant that managers and directors did not know what to communicate, when to communicate and how best to communicate. This indicates the importance of the director role and manager's role in the chain of top-down communication and having formalised structures that facilitate upward and downward communication to deliver information to team members.

There were various other channels of communication suggested by research participants that could be used by Telco DWML for future change initiatives. The data suggests senior leaders realise and distinguish these channels as effective information sharing platforms and platforms to stimulate feedback and discussion. Among the suggested potential successful information sharing platforms in the context of Telco DWML are townhall sessions. What worked in the past were CEO bulletins, information circulars and intranet posts to an extent. Participants also mentioned having more detailed posts from senior leaders, such as meeting minutes including decisions made related to future change initiatives and to have informal sessions to exchange information. It means that Telco DWML should consider other channels to communicate change-related information to staff and present and exchange information with a mixture of structured and a semi-structured approach.

Based on the above there are two areas that Telco DWML may consider when moving forward to enhance communication in change management. The first, reinforcing the role management have concerning the chain of communication in Telco DWML through the formalisation of responsibilities, acknowledging staff inputs during the change process, and establishing formalised avenues for two-way information flow. The second, developing a communication strategy that focuses on even better and more efficient communication channels while being selective but not ignoring how information should be presented to the workforce.

#### 4.4 Participation and Involvement

The theme participation investigated research participants' perception related to the level of inclusiveness of the previous change initiative, the extent of engagement, and the degree of buy-in to the previous change. Issues explored during semi-structured interviews and FGDs were on how Telco DWML engaged the workforce in the changes, what measures were in place to ensure workforce buy-in, and what employee concerns were and if these concerns were addressed by senior leaders in Telco DWML. During interviews and FGDs there was further probing surrounding the topic of resistance and the reasons for

employee resistance, and Telco DWMLs' response to it. Research participants were asked for their learnings and recommendations for future changes.

#### 4.4.1 Inclusion

Interviewed employees felt a sense of belonging to Telco DWML. All participants felt a sense of duty towards the company and were willing and prepared to help during the previous change initiative and for future changes. Participants also expressed their anxiety and fear especially when little information was provided about how the changes would be rolled out. They felt neglected by senior leaders and that their concerns were not heard or addressed. For example, P8 mentioned,

*“I believe most people recognised the need for change, particularly given the industry and sector we operate. But people did not feel included and felt that their concerns were not heard.”*

The above comment suggests that employees are motivated to work in Telco DWML. It also suggests the recognition and acceptance toward changes and that staff members wanted to be engaged, and be included in organisational activities related to the previous change. There is a positive aspect that management did not capitalise on and as a result staff members felt management deliberately excluded them from making any contribution. Some non-supervisory staff highlighted the lack of involvement in decision-making related to the previous change. Others mentioned that whatever little involvement they had was sporadic. P3 remembered,

*“We were not part of any decisions that were made. We were told what was happening to some extent. In my case, my old manager selected 2 people before the previous change to have a discussion, but we got the impression it was more for show to say ‘staff are participating and are part of the decisions we are making.’”*

The suggestion from the above comment suggests that employees felt a lack of transparency and quizzed the intentions of management and their actions towards getting team members involved and addressing their genuine concerns. It underscores the potential lack of trust staff has with management.

The managers in the FGDs had a common belief and understanding that change, in general causes people to withdraw as they get ushered away from their comfort zone as they shift from what they are accustomed to doing to new ways of working, which in turn makes people feel vulnerable. There was a general admittance during the FGDs that managers did not pay enough attention to this aspect during the design and implementation of the previous change effort. FGDP1 remembered,

*“After the previous change initiative, the company had done a staff survey. I realised from the results of that survey, that change is centred around people. This is an important lesson in the context of the design and implementation of the proposed technology change coming up. The survey results were really an eye-opener.”*

The survey results suggested that little or no consideration was given by managers and leaders towards staff members during the design and implementation of the previous change initiative and the impact the previous change would have on the staff. During the FGDs, managers recognised the need to have employees participating, consulted and involved moving forward. There was a general recognition that interaction with team members was a necessity to obtain staff buy-in and acceptance of changes, achieved through mutual understanding rather than team members left sitting on the periphery of change decision-making. FGDP2 recalled,

*“Based on my experience of the previous change initiative, I remember that I almost drove people to accept changes. This ultimately led to people pushing back, not supporting the proposed changes at the time and staff believing I had my own agenda.”*

The comment above suggests that managers generally maintained distance and did not regard staff engagement as an important aspect, believing that staff over time would understand, support and accept changes. Some of the managers in the FGDs believed that it was the responsibility of senior leaders to inform staff appropriately, however the issue with that approach equated to team members questioning management commitment and intentions and impacted employee trust in management.

The managers in the FGDs had clearly highlighted the need to be people-focused in the decisions and actions moving forward through closer engagement to ensure staff understood the changes. Despite time constraints, there was a general agreement that a concerted effort must be made to explain changes to staff members to reduce anxiety and answer any questions to address concerns and fears centred around potential job loss. In this capacity, managers during FGDs recognised the need to reassure staff and allow team members to express their opinions through individual conversations and organised off-site events. FGDP3 highlighted,

*“We need to have an environment so information can be shared openly and honestly. This will promote interaction, buy-in and ownership.”*

This example demonstrates the managers in the FGDs understand and appreciate the importance of engaging staff through a two-way process. On one hand, informing staff and on the other hand, receiving feedback. This confirms the joint recognition by non-supervisory staff members and managers on the



topic of feedback, as mentioned in the previous section on communication. However, there was not an established link from senior leaders to managers and from managers to team members. The result of this was that team members did not have their questions or concerns addressed as communication to their managers, involved in the decision-making was scarce. This in turn promoted further growth to the already existing lack of trust in managers. Also, team members during interviews disclosed that not all managers in the company engaged their team members, but it varied from one manager to another. P6 imparted,

*“Before the previous change was implemented and throughout the process, my manager never had meetings with the team. We found out about any changes through casual conversation at the coffee dock or at lunch time. I know that does not apply to all managers, as some directors involved their direct reports and information trickled to their respective teams.”*

The above quote describes that some directors did not engage with managers and information about changes were not shared, thus further caused issues of clarity and promoted anxiety.

The above comments made by research participants provide a blended image surrounding managers' distanced approach to employee engagement and belief that directors should be responsible for informing team members. While managers did interact with directors, albeit not always agreeing with the proposed changes, managements' distancing coupled with communication links not existing between them and team members, was interpreted by team members as managers not displaying sufficient commitment. Both director and manager involvement with team members was insufficient and inconsistent in different departments within Telco DWML resulting in a lack of non-supervisory staff accessibility to information regarding changes. The lack of formalised structures for feedback meant two-way communication for suggestions from team members to managers was none existent. This suggests a disconnect between managers and their teams on areas related to change and directors not playing a significant enough role or not sufficiently supporting in bridging the gap to share information and feedback by introducing communication processes or structures.

#### 4.4.2 Concerns: Employment Security

Research participants, particularly non-supervisory staff members revealed concerns which from their perspective had a negative effect on their perceptions of the previous change and staff engagement in the changes. The two prominent concerns that continuously arose by research participants were employment security and trust in management. Participants highlighted that employment security was the main issue that negatively impacted their morale and levels of motivation. Some staff members provided examples

that the extent of change, the related uncertainty and how the change was going to impact them, caused sleepless nights. As part of the previous change effort which was techno-structural in nature and embarked on to enhance performance and productivity, human resources (HR) were involved to assess role functions, skill-set alignment, workload and future staffing. Non-supervisory members from 'Mobile' had the perception and mentioned that the job audit was 'inconsistent and unfair'. Managers in the FGDs were aware of team members' concerns during that time, as FGDP2 mentioned,

*"I remember after talking to another manager in another division who had mentioned his team perceived managers actions during this time was to remove staff and to reduce numbers."*

Team members in the 'Mobile' team mentioned that the previous change initiative went on for about 24 months and that they had to live with the uncertainty of whether they would have a job or not. HR were involved and team members in the 'Mobile' team mentioned that it added to their concerns. P1 mentioned,

*"In fact, we did not know what was going to happen. Our managers provided recommendations to their managers, and there were meetings with HR. Decisions were made higher up, but some light should have been shed. Anytime HR is involved, you never know what is going to happen."*

Managers during FGDs believed sharing information at the time when they were involved in some areas of the previous change initiative with other staff would have generated even more concerns and caused further damage. The managers in FGDs felt that it was the only solution at the time and that it was not deliberately done to cause harm, but acknowledged at the same time that they should reassure team members by addressing their concerns. Non-supervisory team members did acknowledge a message sent from the CEO that mentioned there would be no job losses, but it still did not eradicate the minimum level of trust they had in their managers and uncertainty surrounding the impact the changes would have. The survey that was conducted after the previous change initiative did trigger senior leaders to create a working group consisting of different functional managers from within Telco DWML to address areas of concern. Unfortunately, due to a disagreement with the external company, other aspects of change design and implementation did not occur. Most staff welcomed the idea of having an internal working group, particularly as it could be used as a vehicle to inform them of changes. However, participants from 'Mobile' commented that representatives of the working group would probably only inform them of decisions that were already made and therefore they themselves would not have any influence.

The section draws attention to the time of HR-related changes, the time it took and the associated limited information that was shared. It was negatively perceived by team members of the 'Mobile' team as

management demonstrating a lack of transparency, which ultimately heightened fears and concerns surrounding employment security. Team members believed management did not share information to protect themselves and their own jobs. Management on the other hand believed that by not sharing information would protect team members, but recognised that more should have been done to reassure their teams. By not providing reassurance, team members were left questioning managers' intentions and trust in management decreased as a result.

#### 4.4.3 Lack of Trust in Management

A lack of trust in management was the other concern that was frequently raised by managers during FGDs and staff members from 'Mobile'. The issue surrounding trust was related to senior leaders and management decisions and the overwhelmingly negative impact on employee buy-in of the changes and staff support and acceptance of change processes. During the semi-structured interviews, the participant's incessantly questioned the intentions of managers related to the designing and implementation of the previous change. This indicates indirectly the limited level of trust in management. Team members from 'Mobile' also indicated their lack of faith in management during that time. Managers in the FGDs admitted they became even more aware of the issue after it was highlighted in the survey that was conducted after the implementation of the previous change initiative. For example, FGDP3 asserted,

*"Team members had a complete lack of trust and confidence in us and leaders. Everybody thought there was a lack of transparency too."*

P7 mentioned,

*"Nobody had an idea of what was happening. The little communication there was at the beginning was presented well, albeit insufficient and it was never complemented."*

This comment suggests that during the initial stages of the previous change effort there was an element of positivity regarding the changes, but overtime, trust and morale began to diminish due to a lack of communication and clarity. Non-supervisory participants also expressed other aspects that fuelled their mistrust in management. Such aspects included lack of clarity on decisions, not being part of any decision-making, and a lack of transparency related to change impact and processes. The result of this led to reduced motivation, amplified anxiety, and staff questioning the degree of change acceptance and support of those changes.

The discussions disclosed that the subject of trust was brought to the attention of managers after the survey and a collective appreciation and understanding were surrounding the existence of the problem. Interviews did not disclose any management action taken to salvage employee trust through open

communication, by focusing attention on staff or any other avenue. The distanced approach exercised by managers towards employees and inconsistent action of some directors did not help to improve circumstances and promoted employee concerns. In the context of Telco DWML, a lack of management and leadership action had a wide and direct negative impact on employee acceptance and support of changes. Some actions could have been considered to regain trust, but nothing was done sufficiently and the problem remained throughout the previous change effort.

#### 4.4.4 Communication of Employee Concerns

There was an alignment with managers in the FGDs and non-supervisory participants from semi-structured interviews with respect to concerns highlighted by team members in 'Mobile'. The managers acknowledged that employees did not have the necessary avenues to communicate concerns at the time of the previous change initiative. Participants from the 'Mobile' team mentioned in the interviews how difficult it was to raise any concerns and if they did raise them that there was no guarantee they would receive answers. For example, P6 mentioned,

*"We never really got answers to topics we were concerned about. We had questions, but it was almost like it was brushed aside"*

P3 commented,

*"There came a point in time when I stopped raising concerns. Perhaps managers would interpret them as complaints. But even still, we never had a path to communicate and I was not sure how to communicate my concerns."*

The comments above indicate that team members wanted to raise concerns and get answers but were not facilitated by managers. Extending from this, it also demonstrates that managers were not ready to hear staff concerns either. However, managers in the FGDs who had direct contact with directors asserted that they did not have sufficient information to share with staff members and in some cases, they were not allowed to share information with employees due to the confidential nature of the information (e.g. role profiling and skill-set matching). Despite the challenge of not communicating to staff members, some managers in the FGDs mentioned that they were aware of staff concerns, by simply putting themselves in their shoes and accordingly tried to steer conversations with directors to answers such concerns during their meetings. But more often than not, they got limited responses. This again demonstrates a disconnect between managers and directors in transmitting information and by managers not being supportive in providing information to staff.

#### 4.4.5 Employee Resistance

Concerning change acceptance, Telco DWML managers in the FGDs categorised staff into three streams to the previous change initiative. The first category were those who supported changes, the category were those who were indifferent and ‘happy to see what happened’, and the third category were those who resisted changes. As the second category effectively contained those that were sitting on the fence, i.e. either supportive or resisted to the changes, it was where managers had the opportunity to make a difference. The third category was resistant in any case, regardless of the resource and effort that managers would put in.

With respect to resistance in Telco DWML, managers in the FGDs appreciated that it was prominent. It also aligned with participants’ sentiments from ‘Mobile’ during the semi-structured interviews. However, as mentioned by many participants during the interviews, they had become more resistant as time went on as they felt that they were not informed of the extent of changes and the impact the changes would have. P5 mentioned,

*“The company changed the structure, which meant there would be implications for the current operating model. Not being informed about how the structure and processes would change was a big issue.”*

P5 commented,

*“I was not against the changes as such. We must change, particularly given the industry we work in which is IT and Telecommunications. As it is, most people resist change, and not knowing how things are going to change, added fuel to the fire.”*

P9 also asserted,

*“We were not sure if we would remain in the company or not or if we would move to other teams, so in that regard I became resistant.”*

The comments above highlight that the previous change initiative which was techno-structural in nature and involved HR made the current ‘Mobile’ team members feel vulnerable at the time. Despite seeing the positives that change can bring, the vulnerability stemmed from uncertainty surrounding management decisions, a lack of involvement and participation in those decisions and how the decisions would compromise their well-being, employment security and benefits. This ultimately led to further resistance, heightened by staff feeling the need to protect themselves from potential impact. Non-supervisory

participants from 'Mobile' also mentioned that managers had their agenda and the 'dinosaurs' in management were embedded in their ways which did not help. As P1 commented,

*"If some of our managers were not going to change, why should we."*

Managers during the FGDs acknowledged that they were demonstrating resistance at the time. Management resistance derived from directors who mentioned if something that was already working well needed to change. This highlights why staff were not understanding the reasons for change as there was a lack of clarity from managers based on the lack of communication from and with directors. This is due to the absence of a change strategy that would have addressed and clarified the issues mentioned. The data indicates the primary reasons for employee resistance among the 'Mobile' team members at the time of the previous change was due to a lack of clarity from managers and feeling vulnerable (Employment security). Managers from the FGDs accepted that there were times that they were guided by their agendas and ignoring the agenda set by directors. The managers understood that resistance is a natural reaction, but they should have demonstrated supportive behaviours amongst themselves to ease the nerves of their teams, despite themselves not being appropriately informed all the time. The FGDs highlighted how such management behaviour can lead to staff speculation based on not communicating change benefits, the rationale for change, and potential resources required to assist in change design and implementation. These are valid reasons when viewed from the perspective of non-supervisory participants. As FGDP2 mentioned,

*"I always wanted to ask questions to my manager. But it was more often than not interpreted as unnecessarily challenging. That particular director, who was my manager, told me I was negative and resistant and mentioned I should consider moving on if I was not on board. So I got the impression that decisions were made, things are going to happen, and it's best to go with what is happening"*

This comment is powerful in providing insight into the type of relationship some managers in the FGDs had with directors. The lack of clarity and engagement pervaded through to team members resulting in team members' negative perception of managers and manager's negative perception of directors. The lack of communication and participation fundamentally raised resistance.

#### *4.4.5.1 Addressing Resistance*

Managers in the FGDs were aware of staff resistance during the previous change effort and mentioned that they would like to address it moving forward for future change initiatives. To do this, during the FGDs there was a consensus surrounding the introduction of new policies, procedures, processes, and

guidelines specifying rules. The purpose as the FGD members commented would be to provide greater clarity of changes, actions that need agreement and acceptance, and highlight the expected associated management behaviour. Extending from this, what cropped up during the FGDs is the need to have non-supervisory staff participating and involved in the change design and implementation process.

Additionally, there was an agreement during the FGDs on the value staff may bring to certain meetings involving directors. However, some managers in the FGDs mentioned that even directors are sometimes resistant. For example, FGDP1 mentioned based on their experience,

*“The issue is not always us managers. The issue is with some of the directors too. What message are directors sending out to us if they themselves do not believe in the changes? I do not think it was active resistant towards the changes, but at the same time some directors do not push for the change.”*

What this comment demonstrates is the belief that managers had surrounding passive resistance practised by directors. As suggested during the FGDs, directors would not demonstrate it openly, but in the same instance would not demonstrate their support of changes, thus negatively influencing their staff's level of acceptance towards changes. The effect was that managers did not receive sufficient information regarding changes from directors and managers were unable to provide feedback and discuss their concerns.

#### 4.4.6 Leadership Response to Staff Concerns

The concerns raised by non-supervisory staff and managers emerged in the survey conducted at Telco DWML post previous change effort. Since the survey, no firm action plan was put in place. However, as FGDP3 stated,

*“Going forward, for future change, we need to break things down into small realistic chunks, supported by our managers.”*

FGDP2 added,

*“After the survey, we realised the importance of staff participation during the change process and how they are the drivers. Staff are key to change success.”*

Managers in the FGDs recognised that consulting with the staff was paramount moving forward. The above comments also demonstrate that managers are positive regarding staff participation in the change process. Despite the positive comments made by managers, the non-supervisory staff mentioned that they were still cautious about the level of participation they will have in the future. Past experiences of

managers and directors making decisions without their consultation were fresh in their minds. Non-supervisory staff also reflected on the past and agreed that whatever little consultation was done in the past was done after decisions were made. This highlights the deep-rooted nature surrounding the lack of trust and transparency 'Mobile' team members have with their managers.

Managers agreed that in addition to increased levels of participation and consultation that they need to improve engagement and employee motivation. To do this, they suggested working with HR to work on empowerment and incentive strategies for the workforce and introduce staff awards, driven by the staff for the staff that managers would only facilitate. Managers also realised, based on the survey results the importance of building staff confidence and one of the ways to do this was to provide a platform to allow staff to share as much information as possible and allow staff to express their opinion. As FGDP1 mentioned,

*"The survey results really revealed a lot of important things. But, what about incentives for managers and directors? We will also play a critical role in designing and implementing change. I think everybody involved should be compensated for depending on the effort put in."*

In essence, the above comment suggests that while staff should receive incentives, it should not be ignored that managers and directors will have additional responsibilities and their interests, opinions and incentives should not be overlooked. All research participants agreed that workforce and peer engagement is crucial for change success. Furthermore, there was an alignment between non-supervisory staff and managers regarding staff engagement and participation from the initial stages of a change process and not after decisions have been made, like in the previous change effort. P8 asserted,

*"Managers being accessible and available will be key in the future in the context of the next change. It will also add a human aspect to the change effort."*

Many of the non-supervisory participants recognised that change is good and demonstrated during the interviews that they are not afraid of future change. There was also a strong level of commitment towards future change and a willingness to learn from the past. Most research participants highlighted their readiness to accept more responsibilities moving forward. P2 mentioned,

*"Lessons from the past are important. I feel change is a good thing. I also feel the company are lucky as most people are willing to help."*

The comment above underscores the willingness to engage and take on responsibilities. This suggests there is a strong foundation on which managers can build future change efforts.



The data indicates managers' recognition surrounding their role and function to engage staff moving forward when planning and executing future change. The issue surrounding a lack of participation, engagement and transparency was brought to light by non-supervisory staff and was highlighted in the survey results post previous change initiative. There is a general alignment with all research participants surrounding the value of ongoing engagement and participation that should be initiated from the beginning of the change process.

#### 4.5 Summary of Participation and Initial Recommendations

Responses by non-supervisory staff members revealed a sense of belonging to Telco DWML and an eagerness to help during the previous change initiative. But at the same time, they felt vulnerable, which is a natural reaction to change. The vulnerability experienced by staff was complemented through a lack of clarity on management decisions related to the change triggering sentiments and concerns of employment insecurity and distrust in management. The true impact was only recognised by managers and directors after the survey results were revealed, which was some months after the implementation of the previous change effort. Once notified of the results, managers during FGDs recognised the need to have measures in place to engage and involve staff. The objective for managers moving forward, based on their experiences and based on the results of the survey is to gain employee buy-in and increase staff support for future changes through increased consultation. Managers also mentioned working with HR to develop an incentive-based framework for all those that would be involved in future change, including themselves and to put in place empowerment measures. Managers in FGDs and non-supervisory staff learnt from previous experiences that gaining staff buy-in and inclusion are critical to successful change implementation in Telco DWML.

Managers in the FGDs highlighted that some directors were passive towards them and towards the idea of directly involving staff. The managers themselves attempted to engage staff but with little or no support from directors. Managers also acknowledged that they should do more in the future to engage staff. Independent of sensitive and confidential information, the lack of clarity from directors meant that there was a constraint on managers on what information to share and how to share it. As the data suggests, responses from non-supervisory staff indicated that managers were also passively resistant. Non-supervisory staff also interpreted the lack of information sharing by managers as avoidance, resulting in increased dissatisfaction, fears and concerns related to decisions made during the previous change initiative.

The data also suggest that active resistance was not as prominent about the previous change effort. Both non-supervisory staff and managers also commented favourably for future change. Non-supervisory

participants from the 'Mobile' felt that in the past they could not express their concerns. The concerns they had stemmed from a lack of guidance and clarity from managers regarding the changes. As a result, they felt threatened by what the future may hold for them. Managers acknowledged the concerns of staff during the FGDs particularly concerns related to technical aspects of staff roles and agreed that participation and involvement must improve moving forward. Managers also acknowledged the importance of staff consultation and engagement. In some cases, non-supervisory staff believed managers were change resist and had their agenda. Managers affirmed during the FGDs that at times they did have their own agenda and were not always in support of the proposed changes at the time, thus passively resisting the changes. However, this derived from directors practising the same behaviour according to some managers, who also did not agree with aspects of the proposed changes. The consequence was that staff suffered as directors and managers were not aligned on aspects of the proposed changes which resulted in a decrease in staff acceptance of changes and triggered resistance amongst staff. Managers agreed that for future change efforts staff acceptance and trust with different parties should improve, meaning an improvement in communication, participation, engagement and consultation is necessary.

The evidence suggests that without a clear change implementation strategy the impact on staff due to a lack of clarity on proposed changes and scant information about the future organisational state can have negative repercussions and can cause paralysis. Lack of clarity and information in the context of Telco DWML negatively impacted workforce support, diminished trust and heightened anxiety and fears. For future change efforts, it is suggested that Telco DWML prepare a strategy linking directors to staff to pass required information, provide guidance and rationale for change design and implementation.

Accordingly, managers in the FGDs, actions to engage Telco DWML workforce in the future should be initiated by directors and should be consistent in application, and directors should also demonstrate their support. Managers believed that sufficient support should also be timely and should also consist of feedback. Research participants also believed that this would provide inclusion related to future change design and implementation. Non-supervisory participants believe that they would feel empowered if given access to information and activities and they should be supported by managers and directors who champion change and believe in two-way information flow. In this context, managers who sit in the middle have a critical role and should have an accountability framework that ensures necessary attention is given to an issue. The framework should also entail incentives to act as a motivational trigger for managers during this task. Having enough managers that are motivated may result in appropriate effort to engage staff and improving the flow of communication between directors and staff.

Non-supervisory participants' lack of trust in managers noticeably had a negative impact on engagement levels and support for the previous change initiative when it was being planned and executed. Managers acknowledged this issue and research participants suggested two ways to potentially improve the situation moving forward. Firstly, to have closer engagement through staff consultations that in turn could enhance levels of participation and involvement. Secondly, when managers engage with HR, that non-supervisory staff be given a broad understanding and in some cases be consulted on decisions pertinent to them as individuals.

## 4.6 Learning and Development

In this section, the aim is to review the learning process in Telco DWML during the time of the previous change effort and how learning was prioritised, encouraged and addressed by senior managers. I wanted research participants to share their learning experiences and reflect upon the actions Telco DWMLs' management took to foster an environment of learning that helped the previous change effort. I also wanted insight as to what Telco DWML could do in the future to support further learning.

### 4.6.1 Organisation Learning Agenda

One of the managers in FGDs considered learning to be a critical component of the change agenda moving forward. All managers agreed that other aspects such as resource management and vision were critically important. The managers agreed that enhancing the skills of managers and staff and introducing new skill was important moving forward or there could be a risk in Telco DWML failing in the future. As FGDP2 mentioned,

*“Learning, development and innovation are pretty important in our industry. If we do not place learning and development of the workforce on the agenda for the future we will not remain competitive.”*

Other managers also agreed with the importance of developing competencies and enhancing skills in relation to change, such as impact assessments and work design, but confirmed that Telco DWML did not provide much training in the area of change management.

Coupled with skill development, research participants acknowledged that Telco DWML does try to capture learning. As FGDP1 commented,

*“When we try to plan and implement anything, we do learn along the way and from that learning, we mould the direction of projects.”*

Survey results indicate that workforce learning is not systematically captured and that Telco DWML is behind other firms in their industry concerning the expected rate of learning. As a response to the survey results, management had taken some steps to improve Telco DWML learning capacity by creating a dedicated Learning and Development team within the Change Management Office (CMO) with a dedicated budget allocated for learning. The budget was to be used to provide Telco DWML workforce training advancement opportunities to enhance competencies and skills, outside or within the company.

#### 4.6.2 Management Training Development and Learning

The managers from FGDs shared a common opinion that their managers profited from training, mentoring and coaching more than they did during the previous change initiative. One of the managers in the FGDs acknowledged that they benefitted from coaching and claimed the experience to be satisfactory. The FGDP1 said,

*“The training I received was not related to change management, but more about the job itself and the skills and tools that would be required. My manager thought it would be good for me, as it would help me advance in my job quicker.”*

The manager mentioned that the training also provided a platform to discuss challenges and assisted in finding potential solutions to issues faced daily. The other managers did not contest or comment on this.

During the FGDs it became apparent that managers wanted training focused on areas that would be pertinent in the future. All managers agreed that some training in leading and managing change would be very beneficial. They also mentioned that directors would frequently have off-site retreats during which they would exchange and review actions to apply in the future and that something along those lines would be beneficial for them too.

#### 4.6.3 Staff Training Development and Learning

Non-supervisory participants also commented on the need to learn and develop their understanding of change management and shared a common view that Telco DWML did not provide enough opportunities to develop their skills in this domain. The participants shared their experiences based around the time of the previous change initiative and how they had to cope with changes related to processes and effectively learn new skills on their own accord while doing their job. The situation, according to non-supervisory participants needs to change in the future and more emphasis needs to be placed on a training agenda. Participants mentioned that training can be done in-house or by an external company. The collective opinion by non-supervisory participants was that they did not benefit from any training in the past related

to change management and benefitted slightly from training related to skill enhancement for their roles at the time. As P2 mentioned,

*“We did not have much training opportunity in the past. After the last change initiative, we had done a survey and I think it has now come to light the importance of employee development. I just hope the training programmes they develop will be focused on what we do.”*

P5 asserted,

*“Training was never really been given a priority in this company. Since the previous change there is a development tool that our managers and HR have visibility of and we are required to do a couple of training a year, but the option to do outside training we do not have.”*

What the above quote signifies is the evolving requirement senior management placed on training post-survey results and how training requirements were linked to the development tooling system. Participants mentioned that it would be useful if they had to reach a training target in a given year and if they could select which courses to take in addition to what their managers or HR thought they should take.

Participants also mentioned that they should be able to provide feedback on each training session they took and highlight the relevance of a given course from their perspective. Participants mentioned that to upskill and train employees, staff should also be allowed to take responsibility for their development and training.

Extended from formal training sessions, managers from FGDs and non-supervisory staff from ‘Mobile’ appreciated the concept of learning through action within Telco DWML operations. Managers mentioned that learning of this nature occurred at their level, but more so at the directorship level. Some of the managers shared examples of how their managers encouraged them to learn too. FGDP3 mentioned,

*“My manager mentioned to me that directors shared their experiences at off-sites and that they reviewed failures and successes. It was encouraged that I do that with other managers and reflect on what can be done to improve processes and their role in the future.”*

However as FGDP1 asserted,

*“We don’t all have that sort of manager or relationship with them either.”*

What the above comments indicate is that some directors encouraged peer-to-peer learning to capture experiences, while other directors did not provide such mentoring. Learning therefore at the managerial

level is not consistent or systematic through Telco DWML and is dependent on given directors or managers initiative. FGDP2 also stated,

*“In the past, we always felt quite busy and the focus was always on getting the job done and in the process we never had the time or we forgot to put our learnings into practice. For the future, we need to capture our learnings even more and implement them, particularly in the context of the newly announced change.”*

FGDP3 added,

*“We need to have some mechanism in place to capture more learning. My experience from the past would suggest there was nothing systematic in place to capture real experiences and learning.”*

The above comments imply that learning was captured at the managerial level, but not captured and implemented consistently enough to guide future actions. The framework for learning in Telco DWML is single-loop learning in which experiences and learnings are not used consistently to inform or improve future change efforts or operations.

Some non-participant staff members remembered Telco DWML do not harbour and foster learnings from failure. One participant remembered during the previous change initiative that their manager at that time refused to hear any comments about failures. Most of the non-supervisory participants from ‘Mobile’ hinted that the culture in Telco DWML is such that nobody likes to or wants to talk about what went wrong or ask for help. For example, P4 mentioned,

*“In this company, even if we fail we believe we haven’t and people never want to express their thoughts. This needs to change.”*

FGDP2 also mentioned,

*“I think moving forward we need to encourage talking about failures and see it as an opportunity to improve and learn.”*

The above quotes from research participants suggest there is an alignment regarding learning and expression for failures moving forward. While Telco DWML may embrace proactivity and innovation, the environment needs to facilitate it by placing mechanisms in place to allow the expression of failures and mistakes so employees can accept and learn from them. Managers in the FGDs suggested having a

culture in Telco DWML that embraces failure and have it as part of the future learning agenda for future operations.

Research participants proposed to appoint a senior manager in the future to own organisational learning in Telco DWML. The task for the appointed senior manager would be to reinforce the requirement for consistent learning, support the implementation of the agenda for learning and provide an avenue for managers to actively implement it. Managers in the FGDs also advocated that directors play a role in the learning process through encouraging and supporting the workforce to learn in the capacity of developing skills and learning from experience.

#### 4.7 Summary of Learning and Development and Initial Recommendations

The data revealed that leaders from Telco DWML acknowledged how important learning is and have made strides in created an environment for organisational learning post previous change effort. However, participant comments suggest that there is no training of activities related to changes. After the survey results were revealed, Telco DWML had set-up a dedicated Learning and Development team within the Change Management Office (CMO) with a dedicated budget allocated for learning. The team introduced requirements for training in Telco DWMLs' staff development tool. Only one manager found the training session useful and was the only manager that referred to attending a training session. The suggestion is that training was optional. The collective opinion by non-supervisory participants was that they did not benefit from any training in the past related to change management and benefitted slightly from training related to skill enhancement for their roles at the time.

Additionally, survey results indicate that workforce learning is not systematically captured. Manager's comments imply that learning was not captured and implemented consistently enough to guide future actions. Learning according to managers occurred at the directorship level more, through the use of off-site events. Past failures according to research participants were not talked about and the focus was only on successes. There was also no environment created by managers where non-supervisory staff could feel comfortable enough to express potential areas for improvement. The data also suggests that managers did not have any formal responsibility that encouraged a learning culture resulting in an unsystematic and inconsistent environment to implement and capture learnings. Moving forward, Telco DWML can improve the management of learning related to changes by formalising director and management responsibilities to create a stimulating learning culture by implementing a learning agenda. The director's role should be to champion the learning agenda and support the implementation of the agenda. The manager's role would entail actively following-up on the learning agenda and encourage and facilitate employee learning and development. In the bounds of the learning agenda, Telco DWML should review

leadership and management development training and confirm the pieces of training are reliably and unswervingly offered to managers.

#### 4.8 Leadership

The theme leadership was pivotal and demonstrates the critical role leaders have in each of the other change-related activities mentioned: communication, participation, and learning and development. The purpose and task of leadership are reviewed in each of those themes in their respective sections. The data also indicates roles, behaviours, functions and structures of leadership that are interwoven through the other themes highlighting the importance of leadership for defining and guiding action related to change.

According to managers and non-supervisory staff, the structure in Telco DWML is hierarchical. Research participants in their responses identified the different levels of management: senior leadership, senior management, middle management and operational staff. Interviewees also described the roles played by each layer during the previous change effort. At the top of the pyramid was the CEO. Senior leadership consisted of division heads and advisors to the CEO. Senior management consisted of directors within divisions, and middle management were managers of teams within a department of a division.

Based on the data, below, I have documented the leadership behaviours and functions for each management level in the context of changes that took place in Telco DWML. Demonstrated in the sections that follow are the collaborative leadership function in Telco DWML and a review of the decision-making as a management function. Decision-making proved critical and given specific attention. It was allotted as a sub-code to the leadership theme as research participants referenced many aspects of previous decision-making that affected their perception of managements' capacity to manage and lead future change efforts.

#### 4.9 Taking Leadership of Telco DWML Changes

Interviewees referred to the different management layers, clarifying leadership functions and roles related to their responsibility. The non-supervisory staff mentioned that their managers did not successfully perform management functions in Telco DWML changes. They acknowledged that managers had technical expertise but not the required management experience to lead change. Managers lacked the required leadership function during the previous change effort and over some time negatively impacted workforce confidence and their perception of managers. Survey results indicated that employees had a lack of trust in managers. The results have since been taken into consideration and directors want to reverse the negative workforce perception of management.



#### 4.9.1 Visionary Leadership

According to research participants, visionary and inspirational leadership are required when undergoing and driving change. Interviewees agreed that this type of leadership should be a feature that derives from the top, but should not be ignored by management as part of their responsibility in Telco DWML.

Participants mentioned that the vision for changes came from the CEO. However, participants were not convinced that all directors were inspired to advance with the proposed changes, despite the message from the CEO of required change for a better future and recognising the need for staff to be part of the change process. Despite the recognition for changes, managers from FGDs mentioned that the message from their managers, the directors, was not always consistent which led to widespread communication blockages surrounding the need for change. The suggestion is that while the CEO may perhaps have demonstrated visionary qualities, the inspirational and charismatic communicative qualities required did not pervade down from senior leaders to some senior managers. It resulted in some senior managers' lack of acceptance of the vision and commitment to changes.

Research participants unilaterally agreed that a visionary and inspirational leadership style should encase participatory qualities that ensure the involvement of managers and non-supervisory staff whereby, responsibility should be given to them to establish the path for actioning the vision. In this capacity, research participants felt that the communication message from the CEO should have been reinforced through several town halls, blogs, and CEO bulletins. Interviewees mentioned that this would have potentially inspired directors and directors, in turn, could have had informal conversations with their direct reports.

Despite the recognition from research participants that the CEO was visionary, some managers from the FGDs mentioned that their managers did not facilitate the changes. The managers felt that they had no direction. FGDP 2 mentioned,

*"The response I got was that I was a good manager, so I should know how to operationalise the vision."*

FGD participants thought that their managers should have facilitated more during the previous change effort. Managers during the FGDs felt directors should have invested time to develop a strong community of followers and provided a platform for managers and staff to talk about the CEO's vision to introduce new perspectives and to put an appropriate action plan in place. Going through that sort of a process as FGDP3 mentioned,

*“Would give the right signal to our teams and demonstrate that we a people-oriented, that we are open to suggestions and willing to listen.”*

The comment above suggests that managers wanted to demonstrate their collective leadership qualities to build trust with their teams through the support of their managers. In this respect, Telco DWML were faced with an issue of communication and declining trust between middle management and senior management. The visionary statement and the need for change at the time were appreciated and understood. Non-supervisory staff and managers also trusted each other before the announcement for changes. However, this trust also deteriorated over time based on their managers' lack of actions and behaviours, albeit influenced in the broader context of the lack of trust and confidence managers had with directors.

The above alludes to in the context of TELCO DWML, visionary leadership of the CEO was pivotal concerning the identification surrounding the need for change and formulating that vision. The inspirational component for a better future at Telco DWML was undermined, which transcended through the management layers, negatively impacting the collaborative leadership qualities that could have helped to achieve the vision. The issue of declining trust between different management layers and staff affected workforce perception of management capability to lead future change initiatives.

#### 4.9.2 Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership illuminated as another leadership type required for future change efforts in Telco DWML. According to managers from the FGDs, strategic leadership functions entails turning vision into strategy and priorities. Non-supervisory staff and managers also commented that strategic leadership involves consultation, participation and communicating on the change execution process and progress. These functions were the responsibility of directors in Telco DWML, with some responsibilities, such as strategic decision making overlapping with division heads and other responsibilities overlapping with managers, such as consultation, participation and communication. Within the domain of strategic leadership, some managerial tasks also existed, such as resource management, planning, follow-up on performance and actions, and decision-making. Senior managers did not clearly understand these tasks according to some managers. For example, FGDP1 asserted,

*“Directors had the responsibility to take important decisions, and part of that responsibility is to clearly articulate a message to managers, setting out clear expectations, but in my case, that never happened.”*

FGP2 mentioned,

*“The directors are supposed to have worked together and collectively demonstrate how the whole effort is progressing and at the same time, acknowledge the work people are doing to help achieve the corporate goal.”*

It is evident from the comments above that those managers in the FGDs did not believe directors recognised their responsibility. The feedback about the directors was that they were ‘authoritative’, ‘did not want to listen’ and ‘just get the job done’. As a result, managers felt under pressure and were hesitant to make decisions of their own, which caused ambiguity and paralysis insofar as participation with their teams was concerned. The result of this was that any decisions managers did make, failed to satisfy their teams. FGDP1 commented,

*“Directors made decisions, and sometimes we were not informed. This caused unhappiness. Sometimes I felt that they were making decisions to make us feel like that deliberately. If we spoke up, we would be considered as whiners or moaners.”*

Team members, in turn, felt that there was a lack of participation and consultation, and when they offered an opinion, they were turned away by their managers. For example, P6 mentioned,

*“I tried to express my concern when certain decisions were made or tried to give an opinion to help make decisions, but to no value.”*

The comments above demonstrate that behaviours, decisions and actions made by directors can have a negative trickling effect right down to the non-supervisory staff level. Despite middle management trying to make an effort, their motivation seemed depleted to the point of not wanting to listen to team members’ opinion. This contributed to the narrative related to trust in management at different levels.

Managers comments from the FGDs demonstrate that strategic leadership should encompass many leadership functions including, engaging staff, inspiring the workforce, to be a champion of change, foster collaboration and teamwork, and clear and honest communication. These are functions that managers believed would be beneficial for future change efforts based on their experience. Non-supervisory staff also believed that managers should incorporate leadership functions as part of their normal management functions. What this highlights is the recognition among non-supervisory staff and managers that leadership functions are critical regardless of position. Based on the comments made, it would appear that introducing leadership functions would harmonise the different levels of management in Telco DWML. The issue that managers faced and experienced was centred around the social component of leadership into their core management function, albeit demotivated to do so based on directors behaviour and attitudes. However, a steady and gradual process to personally transform may allow managers to excel in

both management and leadership functions. There were managers in the FGDs that believed that some directors and they did not possess the necessary traits to incorporate leadership qualities into their role. Another issue that managers mentioned was that, in the past, they had busy schedules but recognised that they should accommodate team members' thoughts and opinions through an open door policy. Non-supervisory staff commented on their scepticism for managers to incorporate leadership qualities based on their understanding and experiences of the personalities of some managers.

The articulations and opinions expressed above indicate that strategic leadership in Telco DWML changes will require a mixture of managerial and leadership functions, with a focus on designing and executing strategic decisions made by senior management. This, in turn, implies that senior management involves middle management in the planning and implementation of future changes. The main management function underscored by research participants as problematic centred around the decision-making process during the previous change initiative in Telco DWML. The primary strategic leadership concern, according to managers in FGDs, was for senior managers to encompass leadership functions in their role as managers.

#### 4.9.3 Facilitative Leadership

Managers in Telco DWML recognised moving forward that change would be difficult if senior managers and leaders did not support them. FGDP1 mentioned,

*“We are the ones that will be putting the vision into action, as we are the ones in contact with team members and directors. If the bridge collapses, everything stops.”*

The discussions made it clear that a facilitative leadership style would be needed from managers if the future change was to be successful. What also emerged from the discussions is the need to have support from directors to provide the necessary direction for managers to put vision into action. Like other forms of leadership, the facilitative leadership style, according to managers in FGDs should include managerial functions related to change implementation and to safeguard planned outputs are delivered. The managers in the FGDs also mentioned that management functions related to performance and managing budgets should be part of their and senior management' responsibility. There was also an appreciation from interviewed managers surrounding leadership functions as critical to making change happen. FGDP3 commented,

*“I have always been a motivator and compassionate. I really enjoy engaging with team members, but the way things were done in the past brought the worst out of me at times, and I do regret it.”*

Non-supervisory staff also believed that facilitative leadership was key to change success. Many of the participants commented on change implementations at an operational level, implying that they should be included. Non-supervisory interviewees believed that people should work together regardless of the level they operate and by doing so would encourage them and facilitate feedback and support. P2 also mentioned that,

*“To make change happen, we need to embrace communication more. It, for me, is an important leadership quality that we all should practice.”*

This comment demonstrates that those in non-supervisory positions acknowledged the critical aspect of communication when planning and designing change and how it should be incorporated into everyday work-life. As suggested by some participants from the ‘Mobile’ team, there should be opportunities for them to meet managers and directors at different events, such as lunches, teambuilding events and other meetings. Non-supervisory participants mentioned that this was missing during the previous change initiative and resulted in a failure to accept changes.

The issue that Telco DWML was confronted with regarding facilitative leadership, according to research participants, was the differing leadership qualities among directors. Non-supervisory participants indicated the lack of visibility and communication by their managers and also mentioned limited opportunities to collaborate with their managers. Managers during the FGDs shared the same sentiments about their managers and also mentioned that directors were resistant to perform many leadership functions. However, FGD participants mentioned that some directors did perform their management function related to change better than their leadership change function. The consequence of failed facilitative leadership resulted in reduced levels of change acceptance by the workforce in many work units. Directors withheld information and did not provide the necessary support to managers. FGDP1 recalled,

*“There was always a tendency for my manager to blame me if things did not work out. My manager never shared information or knowledge with me despite my positive intentions to help. As a result, messages were not conveyed to our teams. It was very concerning.”*

The above comment exhibits the importance of leadership function at the senior management level with regards to the string of communication to employees and back to directors. There were also instances when this chain of communication in Telco DWML was disrupted at the middle management level.

The reviewed facilitative leadership function related to change implementation in Telco DWML highlighted the vital role that middle managers should adopt to encourage team members to support

change in the future. The facilitative leadership style included leadership and management functions. Non-supervisory participants did not express any major concern about their managers' management function but did comment on issues with their managers' leadership function. There were examples of managers who supported the previous change and practised facilitative leadership functions. They demonstrated their people-centric approach, communicated with team members and made an effort to invest time to bring staff on-board. However, this fizzled out due to the lack of support and information sharing from directors. Managers in the FGDs mentioned that directors displayed poor leadership during the previous change effort expressed through passive resistant behaviour, collapsed chain of communication between managers and themselves, and demonstrating a lack of support. There was a recognition among all research participants that middle management plays a critical role in converting change vision to action and that middle management needs support from directors to make this happen.

#### 4.9.4 Collective Leadership

Assertions made by research participants indicated that there was no collective leadership during the previous change initiative. Participants mentioned the need to have a formal collective leadership function through the establishment of a management committee. The purpose of the committee would define a management structure for decision making. P2 mentioned,

*"Having a group of managers at senior level, including middle management for the management of change in Telco DWML in the future would be ideal."*

P5 also commented and said,

*"Having a central committee of leaders would provide alignment, clarity and transparency."*

Managers from FGDs also mentioned that having a 'change governance body' (FGDP2) consisting of the right people would represent and create an image of collective leadership. FGDP3 mentioned,

*"If we are to be part of a committee for change in the company, we would feel more engaged. This would be beneficial for planning change and implementation in the future."*

The quotes above demonstrate the parallel thoughts of research participants regarding the value that collective leadership may bring to Telco DWML when considering future Telco DWML changes. The managers' comments provide insight into their thoughts and willingness to take on responsibility for decisions made and take necessary actions. Research participants also mentioned that having a working group of different managers from different levels of the organisation that work collectively would build

trust among managers. Responsibilities of the collective working group of managers according to managers from the FGDs should not be limited to making decisions, but also to ensure periodical review of progress on proposed changes. P9 mentioned,

*“If there are a group of decision-makers for future changes that are managers from different functional areas of the company, the chance for us to be informed is greater as those managers will be aware of what is happening.”*

The comment above describes that non-supervisory participant recognised that both collective and collaborative leadership are supervisory qualities for Telco DWML changes, that was lacking previously. FGDs with managers also indicated a positive attitude towards the requirement of collective and collaborative leadership created through management working group as such a group would and should harbour the expression of opinions and views when decisions need to be made.

FGD participants mentioned that having such a group in the company would be a new concept as nothing like it existed before. Research participants believed that it would be very a positive step forward for the company for future changes. As suggested by research participants, it would tie middle management, senior management and senior leadership across Telco DWML. It would also be a perfect platform for consultation at a broader level. Research participants believed that a collective working group of different managers would allow for the coordination of actions, information sharing, address operational matters and break any silos that may exist. FGDP1 mentioned,

*“A platform for consultation that brings the broader organisational community together to inform them of and be part of certain decisions and processes is what is needed.”*

Research participants were positive towards the concept of a collective leadership structure. The main concern that participants had in the past was that there was no information flow from top to bottom and vice versa. Research participants wanted a governance body that would allow managers to be informed of collaborative decisions that could accordingly be passed through the layers of Telco DWML. In this respect, the importance of establishing a collective leadership structure can play a critical role in future Telco DWML changes. A committee that entails leadership community members that are visionary and strategic that help guide and drive changes, assist in strategic decisions and help prioritise for changes. Thus uniting strategic and collective leaders, could promote coordination, participation, information sharing and collaboration. In this respect, a committee of this nature would play a vital role in backward and forward communication on changes among senior leaders, senior management, middle management and non-supervisory staff.

#### 4.10 Summary of Leadership and Initial Recommendations

Interviews and FGDs highlighted research participants appreciation and understanding of management role and function in Telco DWML changes. Interviews and FGDs also clearly classified three leadership types, visionary, strategic and facilitative. The three classifications broadly emulated the management layers in Telco DWML. It was evident from the interviews and FGDs that research participants recognised that each leadership style should amalgamate both management and leadership functions in future change design and execution. Visionary leadership sat with the CEO, who communicated the vision and communicated the need for change in the company. However, research participants believed that the message was not inspirational and the message lacked highlighting the importance of participative leadership. Strategic leadership sat with senior management and according to research participants, senior management did not communicate a clear strategic direction of the changes. Research participants also expressed the lack of change implementation follow-up and also the absence of the people-centric collaborative leadership style of senior managers. Research participants also mentioned the deficiency in senior management to champion change and the function of motivating the workforce. Non-supervisory staff also mentioned this deficiency concerning middle-management. The data suggest that two issues confronted strategic leaders. The first was inefficiencies surrounding decision-making processes, and secondly, failing to adopt participatory leadership.

Middle management, who were in direct contact with team members, were responsible for delivering change on the floor and research participants believed it required a facilitative leadership style. Non-supervisory staff deemed middle management as passive in facilitating the previous change effort. Non-supervisory interviewees were also of the opinion that middle management did not practice enough participatory and collaborative leadership styles that may have helped in staff accepting and supporting changes. Middle managers also shared the same opinion regarding senior managers. The lack of collaboration and participation from senior management and middle management was interpreted as passive resistance from direct reports, breeding further negativity. Non-supervisory staff and middle management also bemoaned the lack of communication. The leadership issue that was behind these comments was the lack of facilitative leadership practised from senior managers as required in the process of change. There was a recognition from research participants that middle-management play a critical role in change delivery also and that cooperation from senior management was pivotal.

Collective leadership was a leadership type that emerged during interviews and FGDs with research participants. It was a leadership type that participants believed that should be incorporated for future changes in Telco DWML. Based on the data from the interviews and FGDs, the recommendation is that



collective leadership could be practised through the establishment of a leadership committee to bring senior leadership, senior management and middle management together. The committee can be used to set organisational priorities, exercise collective decision making and monitor progress. The purpose would be to promote collaboration and communication, features absent during the previous change effort. The working group could also be a platform for managers to support each other and present themselves as a united management team. The committee team should be spearheaded by a charismatic individual that understands the change vision. Senior management should practice strategic leadership and assume the role of change champions and providing peer support to middle managers. Middle managers should facilitate changes and recognise the critical link they are between senior management and staff in communicating changes. The working group, as suggested by the data, should also be used to clarify processes, role and responsibilities, timeframe and promote consultation.

#### 4.11 Summary and Transition

The chapter highlighted four themes that emerged from data analysis. The four themes that contributed to the research framework were communication, participation and involvement, learning and development, and leadership. Each of the themes derived from reviewed documents and reports, non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews and FGDs with non-supervisory staff and managers from the 'Mobile' team respectively. There was a total of nine non-supervisory staff and three managers. The data collection process aimed to reconstruct the management and leadership of previous changes in Telco DWML and ascertain areas to improve change implementation. During the data collection process, it was evident that the theme communication contributed to many discussions and would be an important element to change success for Telco DWML moving forward. Therefore, communication was added as a key theme to the research framework and as a contributing component to the three other identified themes concerning future change design and implementation in Telco DWML. The next chapter presents a revised research framework adopted in the context of Telco DWML future change efforts. The next chapter also includes key discussion points from the findings and actionable recommendations based on the themes.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Actionable Recommendations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the principal findings of the research project are embedded in academic literature to deliver objective 2 and 3 of the study. Objective 2 was to develop actionable recommendations to improve the success of strategic change implementation for future change initiatives. Objective 3 of the study emerged after the presentation of actionable recommendations to senior managers and senior leaders. It focused on the development of required leadership competencies, i.e. management qualities related to and required for managers to lead and manage change. To deliver objective 2 and 3, I compiled the suggested areas to improve change implementation with each of the critical themes of the research framework presented in chapter 4. It permitted the identification of areas that continuously impacted the quality of change design and implementation that had a negative impact during changes undertaken previously. The action and research elements of the research study remained in parallel throughout the study. I had engaged and consulted senior managers from the Change Management Office (CMO) and senior leaders, the Transformation & Transition Director (TTD) and HR Director (HRD) to raise the awareness of the study findings and receive their feedback to address objective 2 and 3 of the study.

### **5.2 Areas for Change Implementation Improvement in Telco DWML**

I had extracted the findings and linked them to central recommendations for each of the four themes of the research framework to identify the foremost areas to improve change management implementation. The recommendations were assembled in broader themes. The broader themes were then divided into two categories. The first category was leadership function and the second category were leadership behaviours and actions. These are classified and presented in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: Template of Change Implementation Improvement Areas*

Change Themes / Areas of Improvement	Leadership Function		Leadership Behaviour and Action		
	Leadership of Middle Management	Collective Leadership	Change Strategy	Communication / Learning	Workforce Trust
Communication	x	x	x	x	x
Participation and Involvement	x	x	x		x
Learning and Development	x			x	
Leadership	x	x	x		x
Frequency	4 times out of 4 themes 100%	3 of 4 75%	3 of 4 75%	2 of 4 50%	3 of 4 75%

The vertical column represents the four themes of the research framework. The second row represents five groups of recommendation derived from the analysed data. The 'X' highlights a specific area of change implementation for improvement and represents the key recommendation for a given theme. The last row represents the frequency in the percentage of a given recommendation among the four key themes. In the context of Telco DWML future changes and for the intention of this research project, a percentage of 75 and above was considered an area for improvement.

The template exhibits four areas of improvement of change implementation in Telco DWML that could sponsor the enhancement of change success. Improvement of leadership function related to middle management was the primary cross-cutting recommendation, highlighted in all four key themes representing 100% frequency in all recommendations. Non-supervisory staff and managers concurred on the importance surrounding the role middle-management should have in change implementation moving forward. Previously this was not given enough attention and was not regularly performed. The criticality centred on middle-management role and function in organisational change is not a new phenomenon. Their role in strategic change is discussed and acknowledged by Balogun (2003) and Raelin and Cataldo (2011). Interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) underscored the expectation research participants had of the middle-management role in Telco DWML future changes and that it should be a facilitative leadership role. Within that role as expressed by research participants, middle-managers should be involved to ensure smooth, frequent and timely communication, provide necessary feedback, involve

team members in changes and obtain support from team members. Concerning changes Telco DWML previously went through, there were scarce examples of successful facilitative leadership of middle-management. Their drive and performance were dependant on their personality and acquired leadership skills. The suggestion was that Telco DWML needed to review and define the middle-management leadership role, function and accountabilities in change management. Given the high percentage of this recommendation amid all other themes, the enhancement of middle-management capacity to lead and manage change became the central recommendation of the research project.

The following noteworthy area for improvement of change implementation was collective leadership. It accumulated a frequency of 75%. Research participants believed that the previous change initiative in Telco DWML lacked collaboration amongst managers. Research participants also mentioned the lack of clearly defined roles and functions in different management layers. There was an acknowledgement among research participants that companies nowadays need to remain dynamic, and change is a prerequisite to avoid stagnancy and to remain competitive. However, managers these days continuously find it challenging to prioritise goals related to organisational change (Langley *et al.*, 2013). Denis, Lamothe and Langley (2001) highlight the importance of collective leadership to deliver changes. As part of the collective leadership function, it is equally critical that employees that are part of the collective group have roles that are complementary and well defined. With this in mind, it was recommended to define, strengthen and bind a management team and ensure roles and responsibilities are defined clearly in the context of change management and promote collaboration and peer support between managers. The data indicated that the CEO should continue exercising a visionary leadership role assisted by senior leaders. Moving forward, senior management should recognise and play a strategic leadership role encompassing decision-making, championing change and act as role models of Telco DWML. Middle-management should act, behave and display a facilitative leadership role surrounding future changes. In this capacity, collective leadership should improve communication between the different management layers.

The other two recommendations that achieved 75% of occurrences related to the improvement of change implementation in Telco DWML related to behaviours and actions of leaders of change and included change strategy and trust in management. Research participants continuously discussed both problems. It was believed that both issues significantly impacted the direction of previous change design and implementation, making the success of the overall change effort questionable. Nuran and Linda (2006) and Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) advocate the criticality of having a change strategy to steer the implementation of changes. The authors mention that a clearly defined change strategy should also

contain information related to the change rationale, stages of implementation, resources required and the inputs required. As experienced by research participants, the absence of a clear change strategy made it challenging to implement proposed changes, monitoring progress and accountabilities. As revealed by research participants, there was a lack of an overall view of the previous change initiative and insufficient details regarding implementation to guide middle-management and their respective teams in the process. The need to have a change strategy for future Telco DWML changes was, therefore, another recommendation.

The data also revealed that employee trust in their managers regardless of the management layer in the context of future change implementation was lacking—lack of trust derived from previous experiences related to a lack of participation in the changes. The lack of participation in the previous change effort led to a failure to accept and support both previous and now, future changes. Trust in management had decreased and negatively affected the direction of changes. The theme is parallel to the advice of Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) who mention based on their study, that found a link between inadequate levels of trust in management and consequently increasing employee change resistance, resulting in employees performing actions that emasculate change progress. It was not clear from the data if managers recognised and responded to the trust issue during the previous change initiative in an attempt to improve the situation. However, there was a recognition after the FGDs that it is an issue that needs to be addressed when considering future changes.

Supplementing the four areas for the improvement of change implementation in Telco DWML, the other recommendation was related to communication and learning. The recommendation accumulated a frequency of 50% and was not considered an area for change improvement. The reason for a relatively low percentage is that before now, Telco DWML recognised the magnitude of both issues and their relation to change management and accordingly placed processes and systems for their implementation. Such processes and systems include a newly established Learning and Development (L&D) team, Communication Team (CT) within the CMO, and a defined corporate communication strategy. The actions and steps taken by Telco DWML are in line with the academic literature. Cao *et al.* (2016), Parsells (2017) and Miller (2012) assert the value and significance of effective and timely communication for successful change implementation. Burke (2014), Burnes (2009) and Parsells (2017) also mention the criticality of organisations to learn and develop throughout a change process and in doing so increases sustainability and for firms to remain competitive. Both themes, communication and learning are critical. Given the weight that they hold, they are incorporated and cross-cut within the four areas for the improvement of change implementation. With this considered, Telco DWML needs to integrate the

learning and development of managers to improve its leadership function and also link learning from previous change experiences to the development of the future change strategy. Senior leaders in Telco DWML need to reinforce and embed communication as a leadership function in all those that will have a role in managing and leading change to address the issue surrounding employee trust in management.

### 5.3 Telco DWML – Change Framework

After reviewing and analysing the data for the improvement of change implementation in the context of Telco DWML, I incorporated the findings back into the research framework depicted in figure 1. During the data analysis process, I realised that many factors would contribute to the success of changes in Telco DWML. After analysing the data, I complemented, reworked and revised the framework to also fit the findings that were deemed critical for the organisation. Firstly, I added the theme of communication in its own right to the research framework as it exhibited a large influence on the course of changes in Telco DWML. The four areas to improve the success of future strategic change implementation were also added as I recognised their importance and relevance in the context of managing future changes successfully in Telco DWML. In this capacity, leadership functions were mentioned as visionary, strategic and facilitative and incorporated as sub-themes of leadership. Complementing this, two leadership actions, change strategy and employee trust in management were added as critical supporting factors to help Telco DWML improve change implementation success in the future. Figure 3 below is a change framework specific to Telco DWML.



**Figure 3: Change Framework Specific to Telco DWML**

The figure above showcases that in the case of Telco DWML, leadership surrounding changes is regarded as the focal point for the future change agenda. Authors such as Rowland and Higgs (2009) and Valleala *et al.* (2015) also assert the criticality of leadership community members and their role in organisational change. The analysed data established that leaders of change significantly impact aspects of change design and implementation also suggested by the literature on change management. In the context of Telco DWML, the CEO and senior leaders led the previous communication effort, which is a crucial element contributing to change success. The analysed data revealed that communication was insufficient throughout the design and implementation of the previous change effort. Change strategy and workforce trust in management were areas that were deemed essential and critical supporting factors for future change efforts in Telco DWML. There was not enough attention or consideration given to this by management previously. The change framework presented will fundamentally have a significant role for future changes in Telco DWML in guiding management through issues that need consideration surrounding change design and implementation.

#### 5.4 Discussion of Actionable Recommendations

What follows in this chapter is dedicated to twelve meetings that centred around the four areas of improvement of change implementation in Telco DWML, middle-management, collective leadership, change strategy and workforce trust. There were two actionable recommendations associated with the

middle-management area of improvement, one for collective leadership, one for change strategy and one for workforce trust. The meetings were with two senior managers from the CMO and two senior leaders, the TTD and HRD. The meetings and discussions led to the agreement and execution of actionable recommendations to improve the success of strategic change implementation for future change initiatives specific to Telco DWML (see Appendix W), and the development of behavioural and leadership competencies required to lead and manage change (see Appendix J-U), thus addressing objective 2 and 3 of the research project respectively. Participant anonymity, confidentiality and integrity were maintained.

### 5.5 Leadership Function

From a leadership function perspective, it was recognised by the group that during the previous change effort, required middle-management to undertake traditional management responsibilities coupled with change management responsibilities. Additional responsibilities presented middle-management with both managerial and leadership functions. The shift in responsibility implied middle management to operate at two different levels, individual and collective. At an individual level, the implication was that middle-management had to incorporate auxiliary change management related responsibilities into their usual daily activities. Such tasks included defining change plans, combining them to tasks of the team and monitoring results. The added responsibilities and lack of additional resources required, as discussed in the meeting were aspects that were overlooked to some extent. There was also a recognition that specific leadership responsibilities and qualities associated with the changes were required, that the group in the meeting appreciated were critical, but was insufficiently supported and acknowledged at that time. At a collective level, unfortunately, there were no collective structures in place. It negatively impacted planning, decision-making and monitoring of prioritise related to the previous change implementation. It resulted in a lack of coordination and sharing of information amongst middle-managers and their teams.

According to Nelson-Brantley and Ford (2017), using a two-tier approach for the implementation of changes, individual and collective leadership are essential properties for leading change successfully. In this capacity, Telco DWML did assume the correct approach of forming two levels of management functions. However, as acknowledged during the first meeting, Telco DWML failed to demonstrate and recognise the additional functions required and did not provide enough and/or any support to practice them. The integration of additional responsibilities was left in the hands of individual middle-managers to action, and therefore, unsurprisingly, there was a lack of consistency throughout the previous change effort. The group in the meeting were aligned with the findings of the study related to the necessity to improve the dual management attributes of changes, individual practices of management, with a keen focus on middle-management, and collective leadership structures.



### 5.5.1 Middle Management

The first two actionable recommendations to improve the success of strategic change implementation for future change initiatives that related to the findings were related to leadership and management functions for middle-managers in future Telco DWML changes and performance monitoring of non-supervisory staff and middle-managers in changes. These were the topics of the first meeting.

During FGDs, there was an alignment among managers surrounding the vital role that middle-managers should play in changes in Telco DWML. The key role that middle-managers play in organisational change is also confirmed by Nieswandt (2015) and Rauh (1990). Both authors emphasise the criticality of the middle-managers role and concerning successful change efforts. During the first meeting, there was an appreciation of some middle-managers who passively blocked the previous change initiative and others who were supportive. The two contrasting perspectives on middle management's role in strategic changes are also a topic of scholarly debate (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Woolridge, 1994,1997; Turnbull, 2001). Some of the literature cast middle-management in a negative light referring to them as unnecessary and a hindrance, given the structures of modern organisations (Floyd and Woolridge, 1994, p.47). According to Scarbrough and Burrell (1996), middle-management cost companies too much, obstruct upward and downward communication and ultimately resist change. The other side of the debate highlights the positive influence middle-managers have on organisational changes and considers them a strategic asset (Balogun, 2003; Floyd and Woolridge, 1994,1997). A study conducted in a UK company by Turnbull (2001) established the presence of different levels of uncommitted and committed middle-managers and that their behaviour had no connection to the length of service, age or gender. This suggests that how middle-managers behaved in Telco DWML during the previous change initiative, either resistant or supportive of changes, are well explained and researched in the academic literature.

There was a recognition by the two senior managers during the meeting that the previous change effort increased middle-management responsibilities and workload. This concept is appreciated and recognised in the literature also (Balogun, 2003; Rudhumbu, 2015). The two senior leaders asked for clarification on how the workload increased. Based on the findings, I had explained that during the previous change effort had to perform their usual daily activities including tasks related to team operations centred around performance, effectiveness and efficiency. Also, they had to track change implementation activities. Furthermore, there was an expectation by their managers that middle-managers would take on leadership roles encompassing the informing of team members, workout how and to what extent to engage team members in changes, and ensure team member acceptance, support and ultimate buy-in of changes. Adding to the complexity, middle-managers were expected to do this with limited information about the

changes. The senior leaders recognised how middle-managers would have felt under pressure and left feeling stressed under such circumstances.

Such circumstances can cause demotivation and promote disengagement (Turnbull, 1999, 2001). The senior leaders also understood from that perspective, why communication from senior management to middle management needed to improve and recognised the need to allocate resources if positive change results are to be achieved for future changes. There was also an appreciation of the critical role middle-managers will continue to play in future changes, albeit taking on additional tasks, by senior leaders. From that perspective, the necessary investment should be made. This conclusion is in keeping with Balogun (2003) and Rudhumbu (2015). They assert that during times of organisational change, middle-management are compelled to engage in leadership functions such as interpreting and translating information related to changes for their teams and themselves, to facilitate change acceptance, take ownership of defining upward and downward communication channels, and address staff concerns and suggestions. How successful employees perform frequently depends on the managements' ability to inspire workforce perception, value and acceptance of a change initiative (Greve, 2013; Russ, 2011). Employees on the frontline who buy-in to a change initiative can impact overall productivity (Harris *et al.*, 2014). In Telco DWMLs' case, as expressed by the senior leaders, such leadership functions are regarded as facilitative leadership function.

After the data analysis and before the first meeting with senior managers and senior leaders, I had reflected on the findings and reviewed academic literature to analyse middle-management functions. Floyd and Wooldridge (1994, 1997) illustrated four middle-management functions. They are to champion strategic alternatives, facilitate change, synthesise information, and implement a deliberate strategy. The typology was advanced by Balogun (2003) to encompass middle management's role in sense-making to interpret changes for team-members and themselves. Balogun (2003) expresses that middle-management are expected to undergo personal change, assist team members in understanding proposed changes, actively take part in change implementation, and maintain the running of the business. Taking the two typologies into consideration, in the meeting, there was a mutual consensus to adopt the typologies by using the study findings to distinctly outline management and leadership functions needed from middle-managers to fit the Telco DWML context of future changes.

*Table 2: Expected Functions of Middle-Managers in Future Telco DWML Changes*

<b>Management Practices</b>	Maintain Running of Business	Change Implementation
<b>Leadership Practices</b>	Synthesize, Interpret and Communicate Changes (Sense -making / Sense Meaning)	Facilitate Changes (Support Team Member Adopt to Changes)

The table showcases the first actionable recommendation to improve change management implementation for future change initiatives. The suggestion was for middle-managers to perform four roles throughout future changes. Two roles each for management and leadership practices. Within the management practice, middle-managers will need to safeguard the operational running of the business and also, take an active role in the implementation of changes. The change implementation element includes translating and interpreting changes into both technical and operational tasks and priorities, assigning human and financial resources and follow-up and status reporting. During FGDs, middle-managers were content and could see value engaging in leadership functions such as synthesising, interpreting and communicating changes in addition to facilitating the adoption of changes providing they had the necessary input and support from their managers. Participants of the meeting acknowledged the issue based on the presentation of findings.

For the framework presented in Table 2 above, the expectation is that middle-managers do their best to incorporate both management and leadership functions during daily work. There should be a focus on team members' actions, all-embracing communication with team members, listening to staff concerns and assist the workforce to engage meaningfully during the change process. It can be achieved through one-to-one meetings and setting-up feedback session with team members. Also, to assist the middle-management effort, as agreed by senior leaders, they saw value in middle-managers presence and involvement in specific senior management meetings and specific off-site meetings with senior management. The senior managers and senior leaders in the meeting appreciated the positive impact this could have on the successful management and leadership practices to support future changes. The senior managers in the meeting also agreed and reiterated that having middle-management at such meetings would improve the communication link between themselves and non-supervisory staff also, which would help in adopting to changes, minimise delay in acceptance, promote the right behaviours and eradicate change resistance and ultimately increase the chances of change implementation success. The points mentioned above made by senior managers surrounding the benefits of middle-management involvement during organisational are also aligned with the thoughts of Kraus, Becker-Kolle and Fischer (2004).

What the discussions in the meeting to this point indicated was the lack of appreciation CMO senior managers and senior leaders had regarding the issues middle-managers were confronted with. The meeting participants believed middle-managers were aware of what was expected from them during the previous change effort, and that they had the necessary leadership skills to carry out and facilitate the change process. It certainly was not the case. Heyden (2017) asserted that to simply recognise middle-management roles can result in compliance based on one's expectation but not necessarily stimulate the required behaviours to inspire staff in changes. On account of this, and maintaining alignment with the suggestions presented by Balogun (2003), Floyd and Wooldridge (1994) and Raelin and Cataldo (2011), the middle-managers should feel empowered, enriched and supported through enabling factors and appropriate support structures to assist in their role related to changes.

For the empowerment aspect, Heyden (2017) advocates middle-management engagement with senior management. In addition to engagement, middle-managers roles should complement those of senior managers. Supplementary to that, senior-managers should act as role models for middle-managers in terms of expected behaviours and provide the necessary input and support (Turnbull, 2001). The advice from the academic literature is parallel to the suggestions made by middle-managers during FGDs.

The second actionable recommendation to improve change management implementation for future change initiatives related to addressing the performance monitoring of non-supervisory staff and middle-managers in changes. Performance monitoring was a topic that was brought up many times during interviews and FGDs. Leadership roles and their requirement for communication are essential aspects to sponsor organisation and employee success during change efforts (Bouckennooghe, 2012; Geertshuis, Morrison and Cooper-Thomas, 2015; Hamdi and Rajablu, 2012). Studies conducted by Grachev and Rakitsky (2013) and Kemp (2013) assessed the repercussions and importance of leadership responsibility to invigilate performance and communicate expectations to engage staff in working and operate at higher levels. Observations indicated that the change goals and objectives of Telco DWML were not balanced among personal development and performance standards. During the period of observation, I did not see any indication that employees and management were working collectively to create objectives based on experience, knowledge and feedback. Research participants relayed the message regarding the lack of a strategy to monitor performance and a lack of performance strategy that aligned with management objectives during the previous changes. The discussion underlines the consistency of sentiments from participants agreeing for the need of leaders to place strategies to establish business practices and employee monitoring in the future, which in turn would motivate employees.

Hornstein (2014) directed concentration on managements' ability to outline, explain and concur on change objectives. Research by Parker *et al.* (2013) related to influencing employee behaviour demonstrates that incorporating performance management tactics is essential when attempting to achieve high levels of employee performance. The feedback from research participants and observations suggest that there was no such mechanism in place at Telco DWML. The lack of communication surrounding organisation objectives either visually or verbally resulted in misguidance, poor direction, low employee morale and job satisfaction. According to Parker *et al.* (2013), presenting performance metrics and conveying company results, motivates employees.

Inverse to some of the research participants' retorts, Hill *et al.* (2012) and Wittig (2012) proclaim that exchanging performance monitoring and company objectives are not sufficient enough to inspire employee behaviour beyond that of individual objectives and goals. The vast majority of employees operate purely for a justifiable salary; consequently, additional strategies utilised by management does not motivate the workforce psychologically (Landry *et al.*, 2016). The assumption is that employees put most psychological value on money and as result managers deduce the average workforce operates best and more effectively under the attentive gaze of management as mutual trust does not exist (McNeil, 2016).

The literature suggests many instruments that company's such as Telco DWML should integrate. During the discussion with CMO senior managers and the TTD and HRD, there was an acknowledgement that senior management understood the additional management and leadership functions of middle-management associated with changes. In this capacity, the recommendation was to develop an accountability framework to perform these functions. The suggestion put forward was to have to enable conditions to empower middle-managers and provide the necessary support for them to perform additional functions. The support should encompass role modelling and peer support from senior management, the authority to delegate, and capacity to attain additional resources (human, financial and time) to perform those functions successfully and incentives to take ownership of more responsibilities.

Since the presentation of actionable recommendations given to senior managers in the CMO and the TTD and HRD, senior managers in Telco DWML have integrated middle-managers into the broader management structure of Telco DWML. The main benefit of this for middle-managers is the immediate access to information and provide input for ongoing and future projects. Some middle-managers have also been allocated additional resources to carry out managerial functions effectively. The principle organisation benefit is that middle managers are now recognised as mediators and link between team members and senior management. Strides have also been taken by the CMO to have the learning and development team design a leadership development programme to coach and train middle-managers.

Also, cost-benefit analysis and evaluation were conducted to consider how a digital performance monitoring system can be implemented as part of the overall Telco DWML Transformation and Transition programme. The system would provide managers at different levels and non-supervisory staff members with a visual of employee performance using organisation objectives and goals as a guide to benchmark employee performance.

### 5.5.2 Collective Leadership

The third actionable recommendation to improve change management implementation for future change initiatives related to the findings was to develop a collective management structure. This was the topic of the second meeting.

While middle-managers would now be part of the broader management structure which aimed to facilitate engagement with senior management, there was still a need to formalise a collective leadership structure. The purpose of the collective leadership structure is to promote consultation across the company, embrace collaboration across different functional units and harbour transparency surrounding decision-making. Working with social actors that are part of an informal network can help managers to lead better, manage and communicate change, and be part of a cohesive network leading to greater change adoption (Battilana and Casciaro, 2012; Langley *et al.*, 2013). Denis, Lamothe and Langley (2001) and Stewart (1991) are advocates of such a structure and consider it necessary in complex institutions, similar to Telco DWML. Such structures can permit individuals to participate in strategic changes in Telco DWML. Research participants believed that such a structure would contribute to the successful management of changes. During interviews, non-supervisory participants expressed that if their managers were part of such a structure, it would increase the prospect of them getting informed of decisions made and also allow them to provide insight that their managers could bring back into the committee. In keeping with the comments made by research participants, one of the senior managers from the CMO highlighted that the role and function of such a committee and the managers within them need to be clearly defined, specifically in the context of the implementation of changes. With that said, the HRD mentioned that the implementation of such a structure would discard poor collaboration, further promote peer-to-peer support between managers, provide a platform for feedback related to changes and enrich communication.

In the context of Telco DWML, the advantage of formalising a collective leadership structure is that it can release pressure and dependency from a single person. It is also deemed necessary for the leadership of change (Hawkins, 2014; Lv, 2017). As discussed in the meeting, having such a structure has the potential to eradicate power plays often linked with leadership, whereby some leaders are hesitant to share their position of power. A point also referred to by Roberts and Stiles (1999). Additionally, it can mitigate the

narcissism often associated with leaders, increase the willingness to share responsibilities, reduce sentiments of vulnerability and superiority. Incorporating a collective structure during times of change provides leaders of change to work collaboratively and concurrently towards common goals (Denis, Lamothe and Langley, 2001; Ospina, 2017; Raelin, 2003). A consideration during the formation of the collective leadership structure would be to have roles divided based on operational aspects and other roles that focus on external stakeholder relationships, for example. In this context, it is necessary to ensure role definition and understand how senior leaders, senior management and middle management complement each other in change initiation, design and implementation, which in Heydens' (2017) study uncovered as necessary for organisational change. Collective leadership is a structure within an institution that practices mutual responsibility and accountability through continuous dialogue and united decision-making and action (Lv (2017) and Ospina (2017)). The literature indicates that this type of leadership is picking up momentum in modern organisations, representing collaboration and joint action. Despite the positive traits of such a leadership structure, ambiguity exists surrounding precisely what it is, and research on such structures is relatively limited, which would cater for a better understanding of role function and responsibility (Quick, 2017).

During the meeting, the CMO managers and TTD and HRD agreed that such a leadership structure would be beneficial in Telco DWML for future change endeavours. The suggestion by the TTD was to ensure such a structure required to reflect and incorporate clearly defined leadership roles of management in Telco DWML changes to realise the real benefit. This would mean integrating expected contributions pertinent to each management layer, in terms of responsibilities, related actions at an individual level and linked to accountabilities, and communicating such expectations to teams. In keeping with the findings, a senior manager from the CMO mentioned that to guide those above, the CEO should engage in visionary leadership to steer the company towards the vision and accordingly senior leaders should set-up prioritise, and take the lead in the collective leadership team. Also, the HRD mentioned that senior managers should be tasked with the strategic leadership functions by being champions of change, role model anticipated behaviours and actions, assume the lead role in enhancing direct communication to the workforce, and practice decision-making at an executive level. Middle-managers can contribute to the collective leadership structure by acting as a critical link between the management team and staff, ensure communication is timely and coordinated to staff, integrate feedback mechanisms with their managers to ensure staff voices, opinions, suggestions and concerns are heard in the management structure.

The outcome of the meeting was an agreement in the development of a collective leadership structure. In this context, it was acknowledged that those that will be part of the structure should be aware of what will

be expected from them, that individuals have the right skills to achieve the leadership responsibilities, and work and communicate collectively, and efficiently. As a first step to developing the leadership structure, Telco DWML will identify the relevant stakeholders that will constitute the leadership structure. The stakeholders will be determined by the impact the new change effort will have on different functional units. In line with the advice from the literature (Hawkins, 2014), McFarlin (2006) and Anderson, Anderson and Mayo (2008), members of the leadership structure will go through team performance coaching to build the capacity of the team and to develop a capable team that can perform, function and deliver to its highest potential. Approaching the coaching aspect from a collective standpoint would assist to develop a better understanding, appreciation and ultimately acceptance of different functions and roles to attain company objectives and assist in the implementation of changes. In keeping with the findings and agreed by the CMO senior managers and TTD and HRD, one of the practical tools during the coaching session would be to focus on becoming excellent and effective communicators and to coach on the delivery of strategic messages within the management team and broader staff members. The Learning and Development team will conduct the collective leadership structure team coaching, which is part of the CMO.

The suggestion to create a collective leadership structure encompassing member from different management layers for Telco DWML is to promote transparency, improve decision-making, enhance collaboration and have well-defined roles and responsibilities of leaders of change management. It will also act as a link between management and the workforce through the development of feedback mechanisms. Coaching for the new management structure may help Telco DWML pursue these actions and to improve the quality of leading change.

## 5.6 Leadership Behaviour and Action

Concerning the previous change initiative, it was evident from research participants' response that leaders did not communicate the change strategy, the impact and the consequences to managers. Subsequently, team members were not sufficiently informed. About future changes, the same uncertainties resurfaced. Research participants felt in limbo and felt they could contribute towards the implementation of the new change initiative if allowed to help make decisions. This is relevant and would require leaders to shift their current approach and share the responsibility to prevent a potential backlash. Data analysis revealed a glaring prominence on personal experiences with leaders that highlighted what employees felt could have made the previous change initiative more successful, including a participatory approach to develop a change strategy and providing a rationale for changes.



### 5.6.1 Change Strategy

The fourth actionable recommendation to improve change management implementation for future change initiatives related to the findings was to develop a change strategy jointly. This was the topic of the third meeting.

The research project found that a well-documented corporate change strategy was absent. It had an acute impact on the previous implementation of changes and also impacted the level of change acceptance by the workforce. The rationale for changes according to research participants was unclear. Managers from FGDs mentioned the lack of guidance related to the implementation process of changes and resources allocation, which consequently created ambiguity among the workforce resulting in an unstable change effort. Nuran and Linda (2006) highlight the criticality of formulating a change strategy as it provides subsequent actions a firm should take despite knowing that a change strategy document is a living product that can be adapted during changes. A corporate change strategy should document the approach and method to implement changes in an organisation (Nickols, 2010). Supplementing approach and method and in the case of Telco DWML, research participants highlighted the need to unambiguously explain the rationale, reason and drive for future changes. Managers from FGDs mentioned the lack of strategy documents related to the previous change. The documents that were present did not showcase how specific areas of change would be implemented and how the change would fit into the broader Telco DWML context. The documents also did not highlight how changes would complement each other, therefore made it difficult for middle-managers to monitor and implement change goals-against expected outcomes, for which they were accountable.

There are four types of change strategies categorised by Nickols (2010). The classification is dependant based on different management structures, organisational scenarios and context and the extent that staff are involved in the development of the change strategy. The four classifications are rational-empirical, power-coercive, normative-re-educative and environmental-adaptive. The typology was adapted by Janicijevic (2017) by replacing environmental-adaptive with creative strategy. To initiate the development of a strategy, the triggers for change need consideration; evidence-based for rational-empirical strategy, driven by management for power-coercive strategy, learning for normative-re-educative strategy, and shifting environment for environmental-adaptive strategy. The rational-empirical and power-coercive strategies are considered directive in that management activate and drive change. The latter two, normative-re-educative and environmental-adaptive strategies require a participative line for strategy development. Semi-structured interviews and FGDs mentioned the context of changes and the complexity surrounding them in Telco DWML. The changes entailed various change processes that were internal,

external, and management driven. In this context, the previous change effort could not be categorised into a single classification of Nickols (2010). The varying degree of Telco DWML changes spanned three types, rational-empirical, power-coercive and environmental-adaptive. By deduction the implication according to Janicijevic (2017) the development of a strategy should entail employee participation.

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) proposed another method to develop a change strategy. The advice provided is for managers to identify individual variables that are time available for the change effort, to ensure staff members are involved and to ascertain potential resistance. Knowing this can determine the type of change strategy required for a given change effort. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) mention that if the change initiative is to be implemented quickly, then managers should reduce employee involvement and proactively attempt to overcome change resistance. If the change initiative does not have to be implemented quickly, then managers should steer away from a prescriptive approach and engage and involve employees, which can also reduce resistance. The two strategy development approaches highlighted by Janicijevic (2007) and Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) embrace employee involvement and participation to develop change strategies. It is deemed a critical factor for the successful implementation of changes. In the context of future changes in Telco DWML, research participants frequently referred to collective strategy development and how it would lead to a better understanding of changes, how they could positively influence changes and how it would increase buy-in from the initial stages. This is in keeping with advice from Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) and Cao *et al.* (2016). Employee participation in the development of change strategies increases staff commitment towards change and reduces potential resistance (Russ, 2011). However, management should evaluate the cost of investment concerning human resources required, financial resources required and in terms of the time needed (Cao *et al.*, 2016; Russ, 2010).

With the above in mind, there was an agreement in the third meeting, to improve change implementation in the future, employee involvement and participation be integrated into all change strategy development types, irrespective of the change triggers or time required to implement changes. During semi-structured interviews and FGDs, research participants commented about their willingness and enthusiasm to be part of developing the strategy. Non-supervisory staff expressed how they could contribute from a technical and process perspective. Managers from FGDs expressed how they could contribute to strategy development by providing input to the change design and implementation plans through identifying the applicability of changes to different technical areas and the resources required to execute changes. The academic literature confirmed the advantages of workforce engagement and participation in the process of developing a change strategy and how their contribution would surpass only the technical aspects.

Engaging staff members allows employees to view changes in the broader context of the organisation and also empowers them (Greenberg and Strasser, 1986). Sharma and Good (2013) advocate employee engagement and participation during organisational change and mention it upsurges employee change support and reduces levels of uncertainty often associated with change efforts. Sandhu (2009) believes that communicating the strategy widely throughout an organisation creates an understanding, awareness and caters for a broader appreciation of how things will change. The result of these actions can create uniform expectations in addition to enhanced staff engagement in future changes.

With the agreement from the meeting group to involve, engage and have employees participate in the development of the future change strategy, the suggestion for Telco DWML in the context of future changes that I brought forward was also to dedicate effort to ensure the change vision is translated into a thorough change strategy. The TTD and one of the senior managers from the CMO also mentioned that the strategy should encompass learnings and experiences from the previous change initiative, such as incorporating the rationale for the planned changes. There was also an agreement from the group that the strategy should guide and steer the implementation of change and that the strategy document is a 'living organism' that would be updated following progress, lessons learned and shifting situations. The TTD emphasised the agreement surrounding the participatory mutual model recommendation for strategy development and extended that such an approach will be incorporated for changes driven by management. As a starting point, senior management has identified external and internal expertise that will collaborate to contribute to the change strategy. Also, weekly meetings have been set-up between the external and internal parties that include management and non-supervisory staff to guide and monitor the preparation. The strategy will also be communicated to a broader audience and will become a reference for future Telco DWML changes.

### 5.6.2 Workforce Trust

The fourth meeting and fifth actionable recommendation with senior managers from the CMO and the TTD and HRD centred around trust. Based on the data collection and analysis, there was a recognition for the need to build employee-management trust. The data revealed that a lack of trust greatly hindered the progress of the previous change initiative. Research participants mentioned that being involved with the newly announced change would give them satisfaction. The notion surrounding trust chimes with the thoughts of Cocklin and Wilkinson (2011) and Sager (2015) about how positive communication by leaders can reduce employees' negative perception, particularly during a change effort. A study conducted by Sager (2015) discovered a positive relationship concerning non-verbal expressive and supportive communication styles on employee performance. The statements made by research

participants were indicative that in the past, leaders were not supportive and did not encourage decision-making which from their perspective is critical to the roll-out of the next change initiative. Non-supervisory participants had lost the trust in their managers and the same sentiments were expressed from managers about directors due to how the previous change effort was strategised and implemented. Gaining the trust of employees fosters high morale within the workforce which positively effects workforce engagement (Al Mehairi and Zakaria, 2014, McManus and Mosca, 2015). Building organisational trust can positively impact employee satisfaction, performance and loyalty (McManus and Mosca, 2015), which in turn can impact turnover and revenue (Rizwan and Mukhtar, 2014). In keeping with the comments made by non-supervisory staff members regarding a cohesive culture, organisational culture and trust are essential as they contribute to the failure or success of a company (Al Mehairi and Zakaria, 2014).

The data suggested a general sense of uneasiness felt by research participants towards the new change initiative as the ramification of historic initiatives are still fresh in their minds. Brockner *et al.* (1997) assert that previous decisions made by leaders can diminish and undermine the trustworthiness of employees. Leaders need to adopt an environment that harbours the integrity and trust of employees to gain their approval for the change in question (Brockner *et al.*, 1997; Paterson and Cary, 2002). The responses from participants suggest that there was no conscientious effort made by leaders to consistently or positively communicate messages regarding the previous change initiative. However, some responses revealed a sense of duty and loyalty to Telco DWML, the appreciation for change and a positive attitude towards the previous change effort. The issue lay in the manner in which it was rolled-out that negatively impacted employee trust towards management. Maintaining trust can make the workplace enjoyable, give the workforce a sense of belonging and can intrinsically motivate staff (Vansteenkiste *et al.*, 2005; Deci and Ryan, 1985).

During the previous change effort, Telco DWML management concentrated efforts on change design and implementation without engaging staff and poorly communicated changes. Due to limited involvement and participation, and insufficient communication, employees, found it difficult to rationalise the changes. Such an approach led to employees questioning the intentions and motives of management. A warning also flagged by Kotter and Schlesinger (2008). Also, the implication of changes directly impacted employees, such as their jobs. This left uncertainty in their minds, resulting in heightened anxiety and feeling insecure and affected their well-being. Consequently, employees felt they had to protect themselves, and became withdrawn, disengaged and as revealed by the survey, had low trust in

management. It suggests that management actions have a direct impact on employee experiences related to the previous change effort.

It manifested to a point whereby employees felt management failed to fulfil their obligation towards them. Not meeting such an obligation can result in sentiments of anger, uncertainty, silence, uneasiness and lack of commitment towards changes and the organisation (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000; Cortvriend, 2004). There is a direct link between HR-related changes and employee trust (Rousseau, Sitkin and Burt, 1998; Saunders, 2011). The researcher concluded that employee trust during times of change is dependent on how changes are implemented and how management protect the rights of their staff.

In the case of Telco DWML, the previous change effort was within the HR domain. Communication to employees related to the previous effort was also limited. In some cases, as revealed by managers in FGDs, their intentions were good and to a degree justifiable in that they wanted to eradicate potential fears among team members. Also, managers themselves had limited information, so they did not know what to communicate. Unfortunately, this contributed to employees' feelings of insecurity, low morale, and enhanced the lack of trust in management.

Based on the findings and previous survey results that highlighted employee-management trust as an area of concern the suggestion in the meeting was for management to understand staff perceptions of management, to reflect on management actions that affect staff attitudes and to re-evaluate management practices to enhance employee trust in Telco DWML management. In the context of Telco DWML, management practices identified so far that contributed to employee lack of trust in management were lack of employee involvement and participation and limited communication. The actionable recommendation was to firstly ensure consistent and effective communication, secondly, for management to role model the behaviours they expect, and thirdly, to improve collaboration and engagement with staff. It was agreed in this meeting that point one and two would be facilitated through the development of the collective leadership structure team and associated coaching recommendation. Also, the Learning and Development team will conduct that, that is part of the CMO and point three will be facilitated through the joint development of change strategy recommendation.

## 5.7 Further Action Taken

Objective 3 of the study was to develop required leadership competencies, i.e. management qualities related to and required for managers to lead and manage change. It derived from a concern that was raised during the fourth meeting from one of the senior managers from the CMO and the TTD. It was related to the capability of middle-managers to lead and manage change. In this capacity, the group had asked if I

could develop a set of leadership competencies required by middle-managers. I suggested that in addition to developing leadership competencies, middle-managers would also need coaching and development, independent of the collective leadership structure team coaching recommendation. I also suggested that it be conducted by the Learning and Development team who are part of the CMO. The HRD and senior managers from the CMO agreed that the leadership competencies would help them form a broader coaching and development perspective. Kilekly (2014) and Lawrence, Ruppel and Tworoger (2014) findings indicated that leaders need mentoring and development to be successful when implementing changes. The primary focus highlighted by the senior leaders was for me to develop a product that can be used by the Learning and Development team to develop, coach and mentor middle-managers to lead change. The point made by the senior leaders was that middle-management first need to be equipped and have the 'know-how' to lead change for the future. Also communicated by the TTD and HRD was that the Leader Competency Frameworks (LCFs) should act as a tool to help the Learning and Development team to identify the types of behaviours and attributes expected by middle-managers. The competencies should also provide a universal language that enables a consistent approach to change.

After the meeting, I reflected on the deliverable; I revisited and reviewed academic literature and the collected data again. The LCFs for middle-managers centred on 'Leading Change' where participation, communication, feedback and joint decision-making was at the core. These are parallel qualities highlighted by the literature required for agents of change to lead change (Gilley, Gilley and McMillan, 2009). The LCFs would form the foundation for the Learning and Development team to appreciate the leadership qualities required for middle-managers to lead change in the context of Telco DWML. It was deemed essential for CMO senior managers and senior leaders (TTD and HRD) before embarking on any further training the team would provide.

To drive LCF development, I further reflected on the insights from the senior leaders and reviewed the literature surrounding leadership competency frameworks. According to the literature, leadership competency frameworks are utilised to illustrate and group attributes, knowledge and skills that sponsor positive work performance and should be aligned to the prioritising objectives and goals of an organisation (Kim and McClean, 2015). Competencies are typically conveyed through behaviours while on-the-job (Gillis, 2011). Competencies can be developed through coaching, training and team involvement (Handin and Steinwedel, 2006). I further reflected on and considering the themes and the literature when developing the LCFs. Bonnstetter (2000) asserts that it is beneficial to develop LCFs that encapsulate leadership capability to lead through managing employee behaviour and attitudes. Developing LCFs for leaders to lead during changing environments is critical (Jain, 2004). LCFs should

promote the importance of communication (Terrell and Rosenbusch, 2013). They should also instil confidence by promoting the use of visionary exchanges with employees (Wang *et al.*, 2013).

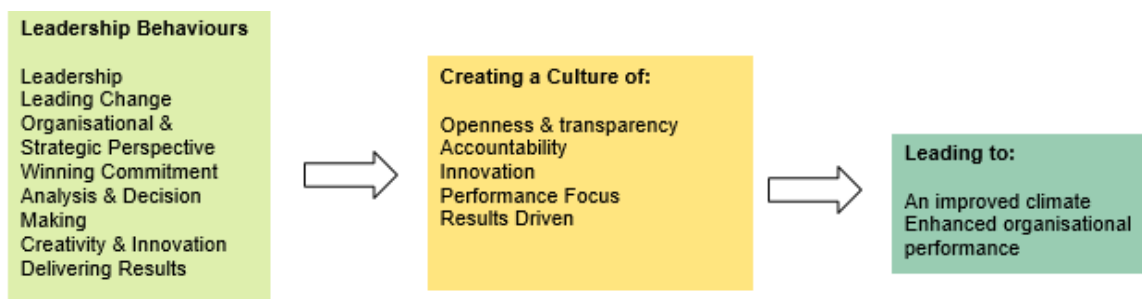
When I embarked on developing LCFs, and in the context of the deliverable, I first broadly considered three levels of management at Telco DWML.

- Supervisors – responsible for operational aspects of management.
- Middle-Management – a bridge between the day to day operations and Telco DWML's Strategy.
- Senior Leadership Community – responsibility centred on Telco DWML's Strategy.

Specific to middle-management, the LCFs portrayed essential competencies enabling managers to:

- Attain strategic objectives.
- Conduct an organisational change.
- Help achieve high performance.

To help conceptualise the findings, the literature, senior management and senior leadership thoughts and the organisational context, Figure 4 diagram was created below to guide the LCF development.



**Figure 4: Conceptualising Leadership Competency Development**

In the fifth meeting with CMO senior management and the TTD and HRD, I shared seven competencies that I thought were vital leadership behaviours based on research findings, the literature and the previous meeting we had. I felt the seven competencies could be used as a model that the Learning and Development team could utilise to train, mentor and coach middle-managers in leading change. During the development of the LCFs, I tried to incorporate how the framework would also support change in employee performance and employee-management relations.

The seven competencies were reviewed, revised and agreed upon in that meeting (see Appendix K-Q). As requested by one of the senior managers in the CMO, I further refined the competencies to develop definitions for each competency (see Appendix J). The definitions were reviewed and agreed upon in a

sixth meeting with the senior managers from the CMO. The seven competencies agreed by all parties were categorised as follows:

- Leadership.
- Leading Change.
- Organisational and Strategic Perspective.
- Winning Commitment.
- Analysis and Decision-Making.
- Creativity and Innovation.
- Delivering Results.

Through the input given by the TTD and HRD, to help the Learning and Development team, I formatted each competency into four sections (see Appendix J-Q) comprising of:

- A definition.
- An explanation of how a competency connects to Telco DWML's strategic aims and change initiative.
- An inventory of competency indicators.
- Opposing indicators indicating a requirement for leadership development.

The aim of developing the LCFs was to help senior managers in Learning and Development to train, coach and mentor middle-managers. After the development of the LCFs, the Learning and Development team used the competency frameworks as a guide to coach and communicated expected management behaviours during an organisational change on two middle-managers. This was conducted by a senior Learning and Development manager during a session that I was present for. The response was positive from each of the managers' perspective, who could see the value in conducting the training sessions to help in 'Leading Change'.

I had the seventh meeting with senior managers from the CMO and the Learning and Development team after the session. We discussed how the LCFs might be used to assess the performance of managers and also how they can be used as a tool to determine which competencies are demonstrated by managers to fulfil their objectives. This, in turn, may indicate what competencies managers need to work on. As discussed with the senior managers from the CMO and the senior Learning and Development Manager who conducted the initial coaching session, it may promote discussion in the form of feedback to help middle-managers learn and develop to help improve themselves as leaders. This is particularly applicable during times of change and to help build their team(s) as leaders and enhance team performance.



There was an agreement surrounding the value of developing LCFs, based on the session we had with the two middle-managers. Jackson and Chapman (2012) assert the importance of non-technical competencies and/or behavioural competencies. The senior management staff from Learning and Development and I discussed how best to reinforce individual critical non-technical competencies and/or behavioural competencies pertinent to and in the context of Telco DWML that the Learning and Development team could use during more training sessions for managers and potentially frontline workforce. Behavioural and technical competencies should promote employee success in organisations (Decius and Schaper, 2017; Getha-Taylor, Blackmar and Borry, 2016; Gomez-Arizaga, Conejeros-Solar and Martin, 2016).

As I reflected on this further, I developed three behavioural competencies that were developed based on revisiting analysed data themes, reviewing professional and academic literature, and leaning on insights from the previous meeting with senior managers from the CMO and the Learning and Development team. The behavioural competencies included:

- Effective Communication.
- Team and Collaborative Working.
- Change, Adaptability and Flexibility.

The design and format of the behavioural competencies were reviewed and agreed upon by senior management in Learning and Development in an eighth meeting. A ninth meeting with the TTD and HRD meant having to refine the behavioural competencies further. As part of the development and refinement process, the behavioural competencies, as indicated by the TTD and HRD, should assist Telco DWML in safeguarding that the organisation can deliver change by:

- Offering clear expectations regarding requirements to be successful in a role.
- Offer a basis for professional development planning.
- At a broader level, provide a basis of Telco DWML human resource practices.

The behavioural competencies, as indicated by the senior leaders, should also support Telco DWMLs vision, mission, goals and objectives. They should also tighten employee commitment towards Telco DWML's principles and values, which should be communicated by middle-managers to staff members based on Telco DWML's strategic plan. The words and language used by the senior leaders in that meeting and the emphasis placed on management role aligned to the literature surrounding management practice required to lead and manage change, whereby it should promote cordial team relations, participation and joint decision-making. The feedback that was provided was reflected upon and

integrated during the development of the behavioural competencies (see Appendix R-U). The behavioural competencies were reviewed and agreed upon by senior management from the CMO that included senior managers from the Learning and Development team, and the TTD and HRD in an eleventh meeting. The initially agreed recommendations, coupled with actionable recommendations and actions taken, such as the development, roll-out and testing of leadership and behavioural competencies represented my overall contribution to the work-based problem.

## 5.8 Summary and Transition

Telco DWML had gone through a previous change initiative. Senior management was keen to learn about how well the changes were led from the perspective of its middle-managers and team members. Senior management and leaders assisted in participant selection for data collection. Upon data analysis, four areas to improve change implementation were identified for future changes. Two management functions required attention to improving future change implementation. The first was centred on practising collective leadership and the second centred on middle-management roles in the design and implementation of changes. These areas were identified as key for future change implementation in Telco DWML through the integration of people-centric leadership practices in management functions. It is suggested that Telco DWML further advance responsibilities and accountabilities for the different management layers at both individual and collective level that are related to the change process. This would help establish a framework to support managers and to develop the necessary leadership skills required for change implementation. This would help the learning and development team that are part of the CMO to develop a leadership development and coaching programme for individual managers and help them also design the leadership team performance training for the collective management structure. The experience that the current learning and development team have in leadership development and coaching can then be enhanced to facilitate all management layers.

Complementing the above functions, there were also two management practices that Telco DWML need to focus on to improve change implementation for future changes. These are change strategy and workforce trust. The findings suggested that management in Telco DWML develop a change strategy through the participation, involvement and engagement of employees. By doing this, it would ultimately give clarity of changes at different management levels and provide team members and middle-management with guidance in implementation, increase change success, enhance employee support and acceptance of changes. From a workforce trust perspective, research participants lacked trust in their managers and believed trust to be a critical component to change success in Telco DWML. To rebuild trust Telco DWML, need to evaluate management practices and consider the impact of decisions on staff

and the organisation. There is a need to improve collaboration, communication and appropriate role modelling of expected behaviours by management. The four findings were assembled (see Appendix W), highlighting areas of focus and action, and actions taken to date based on the findings after meetings with senior managers and senior leaders to improve change management implementation for future change initiatives at Telco DWML.

Through group evaluation, it was agreed that LCFs be developed to assist the learning and development team coach middle-managers in leading and managing change. The LFCs, as agreed with senior CMO members and senior leaders, were complemented with behavioural competencies critical to Telco DWML (see Appendix J-U). The frameworks were developed based on academic literature focused on leading change initiatives, the findings from the study and feedback from senior managers and senior leaders. The final chapter provides study conclusions and reflections based on my experience of engaging in the action research project.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions, Reflections and Self Reflections**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the conclusions of the research study, reflections, and self-reflection. The conclusion section forms the original research study aim and objectives and provides a summary of how these were attained during study implementation. Reflections surrounding added benefits realised by the research project are also included. Reflections occurred at every stage of the study and was another parallel process throughout the research. The reflection sections of the chapter encompass my reflections on the study process, the knowledge and skills gained, and how I was growing and developing as a scholar-practitioner. Entries of thoughts and experiences were regularly entered into my journal during the study. My reflections on the research project process, how it influenced me and how I influenced it helped to improve the quality of the study. Reflective journal entries helped in mitigating the risk of injecting my own bias and influence on the study, and also helped consider the diverse thoughts and experiences of research participants, senior managers and senior leaders.

### **6.2 Study Conclusions**

The study was conducted in a telecommunications company called Telco Digital Wireless Mobile Landline (DWML). The aim was to contribute to improving management practices in the company through generating knowledge that was organisation-specific on the management and leadership of Telco DWML changes. Telco DWML was going through significant changes and were eager to learn about how well previous changes were led from the perspectives of its employees and managers. The research study focused on changes undertaken at Telco DWML during the timeframe of 2010 – 2016 to contribute to improving the success of change management implementation practices in the organisation by producing knowledge specific to the company on the management and leadership of Telco DWML changes. The objectives of the study were threefold. Objective 1 was to provide first-hand experiences of employees' perspective of the previous change efforts, the impact it had on them, and the beliefs they had regarding senior management effectiveness in implementing future change initiatives. Objective 2 was to develop actionable recommendations to improve change management implementation for future change initiatives. Objective 3 of the study emerged after the presentation of actionable recommendations to senior managers and senior leaders. It focused on the development of required leadership competencies, i.e. management qualities related to and required for managers to lead and manage change.

During the design of the research methodology, I carefully deliberated and reflected that the topic was representative of a real management issue to improve change management implementation practices. It suggested that the research project be embedded in an action research (AR) framework. Specifically,

within the AR framework, I was an insider, as I was a full-time staff member of the company and I had the necessary preunderstanding of the organisation's structures, policies, politics, language and culture, which authentically contributed to the research project. As the study was grounded in an AR framework, there were two parallel processes, research and action, that were implemented continuously and applied during the life of the study. Social constructionism with interpretive epistemology to generate knowledge was the philosophical framework of the study. The study utilised a phenomenological case study as a research methodology. The methodological framework permitted the development of my understanding of previous changes in Telco DWML through the views and reflections of research participants.

Face-to-face interviews with nine non-supervisory participants and focus group discussions (FGDs) with three managers allowed the review of how previous change was led and practised under three themes of the leadership of changes of the research framework (Figure 1). The themes were participation and involvement, learning and development and leadership of changes. Communication was added in the framework (Figure 3) as a fourth theme after data analysis as it was deemed a critical success factor in the context of future Telco DWML changes.

The data analysis phase revealed four core areas to improve change implementation that focused on leadership functions in the context of Telco DWML. In the context of how previous changes were designed and led in Telco DWML, two areas for improvement proved to have a significant impact. These were the roles and functions of collective leadership and specifically the roles and functions of middle managers in changes. The suggestion for Telco DWML was to recognise and enlarge accountabilities and responsibilities at each management layer specific to change processes at both an individual and collective level.

Within the collective leadership structure, the suggestion was to allocate a visionary leadership role to the CEO, who would utilise executive power and steer the company towards the vision. Senior managers would be assigned to perform strategic leadership functions by being champions of change; role model anticipated behaviours and actions, assume the lead role in enhancing direct communication to the workforce, and practice decision-making at an executive level. Middle managers would be assigned to perform facilitative leadership functions to operationalise changes, interpreting and translating information related to changes for their teams and themselves, to facilitate change acceptance, take ownership of defining upward and downward communication channels, and address staff concerns and suggestions. Based on the presentation of findings and meetings with senior managers and senior leaders, it was agreed that a collective leadership structure is created as it would improve communication, collaboration and decision-making among managers that would prove beneficial for change

implementation. Accordingly, a stakeholder analysis was conducted to decipher members that would be part of the collective leadership structure with assigned roles and responsibilities.

The study also revealed the middle management role that was played during the previous change effort and the broader impact of their leadership on employees acceptance of changes. Middle managements' leadership performance varied from engaging and supporting team members in changes, while at times they acknowledged they passively blocked change implementation. The study confirmed that previous change efforts enlarged the tasks and responsibilities of middle managers. The consequence was middle managers had to perform supplementary management and leadership functions including taking ownership of operational aspects of changes, applying extra effort to help team members meaningfully engage in the change process, and attempt to obtain staff support and buy-in of changes. To address middle management performance of changes, senior managers and senior leaders first recognised through the findings the additional functions of middle management in changes. Accordingly, it was acknowledged the need for a responsibility and accountability framework related to those functions and the requirement for senior management to support middle management in those functions also. As a result of the presentation of findings and meetings with senior managers and senior leaders, middle management was integrated into a wider management structure providing visibility of ongoing projects. In addition, middle management will be allocated more resources for future changes. There was also a recognition that middle managers are a link between senior management and team members.

Extending the acknowledgement of the role and function of collective leadership and leadership of middle management, it was agreed with the senior managers and senior leaders, for the need to develop a support framework for managers to enhance their leadership skills at Telco DWML. This would be achieved through the development of a leadership development and coaching programme for individual managers and collective management. The programme will be led by the Learning and Development (L&D), which is part of the Change Management Office (CMO). As part of the broader programme, leadership and behavioural competencies on how to 'Lead and Manage Change' was developed after which two middle managers were trained. The outcome of the training session was positive, and the middle managers appreciated the value it would bring to them when designing and implementing future changes.

The two other areas to improve strategic change implementation related to the specific behaviours and actions of leaders that played a critical role in the previous implementation of changes in Telco DWML and the level of staff acceptance. The two areas were change strategy and workforce trust. The study revealed a lack of a well-documented corporate change strategy had a negative impact on the previous implementation of changes and also impacted the level of change acceptance by the workforce. There was

limited information on the type of change the company was embarking on. The rationale for changes was also unclear. There was a lack of guidance related to the implementation process of changes and lack of resources allocation, which consequently created ambiguity among the workforce resulting in an unstable change effort. The suggestion for Telco DWML was to create a change strategy that provides guidance free of ambiguity to the organisation on translating the change vision to stable change-oriented results. The change strategy should also empower managers to monitor achievements related to expected outcomes and stipulate much-required clarity to staff members on best practices to operationalise them. The findings highlighted that the change strategy is developed in a participatory capacity through engaging and leaning on the expertise of both internal and external expertise. It was believed that embracing such a strategy would lead to change processes to be better managed, increase staff members' support and acceptance of changes, and ultimately would increase the success of and improve the implementation of change. Based on the presentation of findings and meetings with senior managers and senior leaders, both internal and external experts were identified to define the type of change strategy required for future Telco DWML changes. Weekly engagement and consultation sessions were also set-up that includes internal and external parties and also includes middle-management and non-supervisory staff to guide and monitor the preparation.

Another priority area that was found to improve change implementation was to regain workforce trust. The findings revealed that staff members were motivated by the previous change initiative. They were motivated for changes, and they also felt committed and a sense of belonging towards changes. However, management actions and how past changes were implemented, specifically how human resources (HR) were involved in assessing role functions, skill-set alignment, workload and future staffing, had a tremendous negative impact on staff during the previous change effort. It resulted in lowered trust in management. With a new CEO appointed in Telco DWML since 2016, the company and its management had an opportunity to rebuild trust through role modelling and demonstrating the organisation's values by its managers, and improve collaboration and engagement with staff through consistent company-wide and targeted effective communication. Based on the presentation of findings and meetings with senior managers and senior leaders, the necessity to have a collective leadership structure was reinforced. It was agreed that such a structure would elevate workforce trust as members of the collective leadership structure would gain insight into staff perception of management. The collective leadership structure would then accordingly be in a position to re-evaluate management actions, rethink management practices and understand how the decisions made by management affect the attitudes and behaviours of staff. The development of leadership development and coaching programme conducted by the L&D team would

facilitate the required competencies to improve the leadership skills of managers. The joint development of a change strategy would also improve collaboration and trust.

Running in parallel to the research component of the study and in addressing objective 3 of the study, I ensured I continuously engaged with senior managers and senior leaders at each step of its implementation. The research project commenced through consultation with senior management. To obtain the context of previous changes, additional information was gathered from senior management before and during the data collection stage. Upon data analysis, 12 meetings were held with senior management and senior leadership to validate the findings and to classify areas to operationalise the recommendations. The study findings were presented to senior management and senior leaders during the first meeting. The management welcomed the study findings and highlighted the relevance in the context of improving future change implementation in Telco DWML. The management suggested integrating the recommendations to future change initiatives, for example having a collective leadership structure and the development of the leadership development and coaching programme with associated leadership and behavioural competencies. The management also appreciated the value surrounding the practical focus and the benefit of the recommendations, and implementation of leadership and behavioural competencies for L&D to help managers lead and manage change. Some concrete actions were already taken and approved to implement the recommendations that would be included for future change implementation.

The areas for improvement identified to improve the success of strategic change implementation are critical for future Telco DWML changes. The areas for improvement are an opportunity for Telco DWML to break silos, improve performance, enhance collaboration, and improve the success of organisational changes. However, it also highlighted challenges for senior management and senior leaders to address the right prioritise. Having a newly appointed CEO represents an opportunity to broadly form high standards of management and leadership practices, particularly associated with change management, which is pivotal to an organisations success. In doing so, it will contribute to management restoring workforce trust in them and will encourage staff members to engage in organisational processes. For this to be realised, senior managers and senior leaders agreed on decisions for action. The agreed decisions and actions were undertaken based on the presentation of actionable recommendations during the study. The agreed decisions and actions would not have occurred without the formulation of actionable recommendations, derived from the academic literature and analysed participant data.

For example, among those agreed decisions and actions was an integration of middle-managers into a wider management structure to provide them with the visibility of ongoing projects, stakeholder analysis and grouping was conducted to decipher members to incorporate into a collective leadership structure



with clear responsibilities, roles and accountabilities of managers in changes. Action towards the development of leadership development and coaching programme with associated leadership and behavioural competencies to coach managers on how to lead and manage change, that will continue to be conducted by L&D have also been undertaken. Finally, for the formulation of a future change strategy, both internal and external parties are identified, and weekly consultations are set-up with relevant non-supervisory staff and middle-managers to help in the preparation. Also, there is a recognition and appreciation to provision strategic guidance and consistent collaboration through extensive backward and forward communication.

The above demonstrated that I was able to achieve the initial study objectives as I documented and assessed change management practices entrenched in previous Telco DWML changes, from which actionable recommendations were produced. The recommendations were shared and discussed with senior managers and senior leaders, which resulted in additional concrete actions to improve the success of future strategic change implementation efforts. This represented my contribution to improving management practices in the company through generating actionable knowledge that was organisation-specific on the management and leadership of Telco DWML changes through which actions were taken and attempt to contribute to the gap in the change management literature surrounding change management implementation strategies that improve the success of change initiatives; the aim of the study.

Other benefits also stemmed from the research project that went beyond the objectives. I learned a considerable amount of related approaches and management styles from middle-managers, seniors managers and senior leaders. Through the direct access, interactions and exchanges with management I found many of them were change advocates and championed future change efforts. They always demonstrated an openness to discuss, an eagerness to learn and sought to improve their management style and ways to improve the organisation. Many ideas were shared, and generally, the dialogue was positive. I observed there was an underlying willingness to change themselves and the organisation. Such characteristics are the foundations required for the success of the new Telco DWML changes.

To conduct a research project within an organisation that I was working in gave me a sense of gratification, from a personal and professional perspective. The result was both inner and outer growth and growth as a scholar-practitioner in the organisation. I was recognised as an individual by colleagues and management for my knowledge of change management and organisational development. Due to the extensive communication with management during the study, I also learned and observed from their experiences, the types of issues they were confronted with, how they addressed and handled those issues, which in turn added to my further personal and professional development. The research project also

permitted me to engage and communicate with stakeholders beyond the norm, which significantly improved my understanding of the functioning of the organisation, which enhanced my confidence in organisational settings and improved my communication skills.

### 6.3 Reflections of the Action Research Project

Experience in the University of Liverpool (UoL) Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) program had provided a platform for me to appreciate and be more thoughtful regarding the significance of exploring strategies to improve change implementation at Telco DWML. As a novice action researcher, I respected and put mechanisms in place to evade bias during non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews and FGDs by adopting suitable protocols. During the action research cycles, stable personal and professional relationships developed, allowing for continuous contributions towards new ideas and experiences linked with future research concerning the topic of this action research project. To date, the learning curve has been steep as the scale and type of research is one that had not been experienced before. The process was and still is rewarding. It was extremely challenging but resulting in growing knowledge to levels previously deemed inconceivable; marked by learning through the academic literature, interactions and discourse with university staff, fellow students and organisation practitioners.

There have been essential learnings throughout the action research journey to date. The learnings have been pertinent to change, action research and myself. The journey has and will continue to teach me that change in many ways is similar to action learning as both processes embody a continuous process of learning, development and progress towards innovative and novel outcomes, and understandings guided by reflection and action. Engaging in action research cycles helped me to question myself, regarding who I am, what I do, how I do something, why I do something the way I do, and where will I be going. In essence, the journey to date has stripped me bare and exposed me to others and myself, allowing me to question my perspectives, values and judgements. Like change management, I found this process bringing me from one state to another state through continuous evaluation, luring awareness, redesign, tailoring to evolving requirements, inspection and introspection.

One of the critical learnings in this process was that action-orientated research is a continuous process. I gained academic insight surrounding the topic of research, gained experience in action research and phenomenological case study methodology through academic guidance, my peers and different employees. The research project produced data that allowed me to help leaders harvest strategies to improve the success of future change implementation and create an awareness surrounding the behavioural management competencies required for leading and managing change.

Incorporating many phases stimulated by reflection and reflexivity at each cycle lead to adjustments through iterations (Yang, Huang and Hsu, 2014; Zuber-Skerritt and Perry, 2002). It meant that planning took time. It allowed me to see the bigger picture and make connections, giving clarity to the progress and the journey the research project brought me on. The three types of reflection highlighted by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) gave me a broader appreciation of the management issue and helped me understand myself as time went on through continuously questioning. I questioned the knowledge I gathered (content); the process in which I gathered knowledge (process); and questioned myself in terms of the assumptions I held and my perspective (premise). Questioning inwards and outward in terms of social, political and cultural context, and recognising how this could affect my judgement led to an appreciation of reflexivity. Journaling was a pivotal activity to document my reflections at each stage of the AR cycle.

I learned, and I am still learning, research that has an action orientation necessitates a thorough approach to accommodate rigour and relevance to back the technical and wide range of practice associated with AR. I realise as a reflective practitioner, the importance of intertwining and the dependence of rigour and relevance to maintain balance. I also considered behaviour modification to facilitate my insider action researcher role as an organisation member, researcher and internal consultant. In addition to the books and journals that I had referenced to apply AR, I gained a better understanding of my role as time went on. I realised that I was becoming more aware of my role and differentiating myself as a researcher and the organisation system in which the study was taking place.

The study was approached based on a real issue with a specified timeframe. The project was falling into quadrant two of Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) '*Focus of Researcher and System*' (p.123) diagram and moved towards quadrant four as the system was committing to change. I was challenged from the outset, as I found myself introducing action research cycles of inquiry to the project. It was not set-up as an action research project, to begin with. The instruction for this research project originated from senior leaders at Telco DWML to improve the success of future change implementation by drawing on the perspectives and experiences of employees and managers. As time went on, I found the nature of the project changing. There was a display of commitment towards organisational change from the organisation system, leaving the overarching transformation programme open to review. This transpired more so after active participation in the FGDs. The FGDs allowed the project to gain some momentum, and I realised that there was further buy-in and support as the project evolved and as stakeholders' realities were expressed by acknowledging each other's curiosities. By removing words like 'research' and 'project' during dialogue, the type of words often associated with much work; I found participants and stakeholders engaging more. This approach ultimately lowered psychological barriers and brought

about a collective appreciation, recognition and willingness to address the work-based problem. It promoted a level of commitment from the system allowing for greater ease of access to stakeholders.

#### 6.4 Reflections on the Study Process

My understanding of Telco DWML, about the structure, culture and organisation dynamics, and having been engaged in the DBA programme formed the basis for my preunderstanding which guided and motivated me to work on the practical aspects of the project with participants and stakeholders. It led to a better understanding induced from what I had experienced. From this perspective, working as an insider does have its advantages. However, there were times during data collection that I had to restrain myself from expressing an opinion based on my knowledge and feelings as an organisation member and particularly as I began to build an appreciation of what was occupying the minds of others. Journaling provided a path for me 'to vent', bracket and reflect on my thoughts and perspectives. It also helped me retain an awareness concerning the criticality of participants' understanding and definitions.

I did experience some challenges with the open-ended nature of the interview questions. One of the main challenges I faced was to keep track of time and data. Often participants felt as nervous as did I, more so at the beginning of the entire process. While I am accustomed to facilitating one-on-one interview type situations to extract data in my 'normal' role, what made this process very different to any other time was, that I was trying to relate information to the academic sphere while trying to understand the true sentiments of participants. This required a more attentive approach on my part. During the interview process, I found myself in a situation where I was listening more, rather than talking and giving potential solutions. I noticed my interview style changing as required with each participant. I found that I was forming authentic relationships that intrinsically motivated participants resulting in an in-depth understanding. Supervisor guidance concerning how I should see data from participant perspectives increased reflection, providing fresh perspectives when interpreting data.

Frequently in the practitioner world as internal consultants, we are pressured to give solutions. Sometimes we may not know the full scope of the problem and how individuals or how potential solutions may impact individuals. At times, while tempted to speak, I continuously found myself listening more. I tried to use the open-ended nature of the inquiry to my advantage. I was beginning to accept that I was not in control but facilitating a process for the good of the situation and not purely for 'hitting a target'. Following a non-confrontational and facilitative line of questioning allows participants to portray themselves, their perspectives and their experiences more openly (Riiskjaer, Ammentorp and Kofoed, 2012). I found the approach more beneficial. As a result, I also found that the open-ended nature of inquisition in combination with a shift in my approach to be advantageous. I felt it minimised bias.

I felt the interviewing phase of data collection marked a personal development in my evolution as a scholar-practitioner, facilitated by learning to appreciate to invest time in people and to listen to their genuine concerns without judgment. The knowledge gained and data gathered during the interviewing process offered the opportunity to analyse and interpret data, and decipher what action to take competently in real-time as I took on a naturalistic mode of observation, questioning and description. Respectfully listening and holding judgement allowed participants to give honest accounts of previous events, current processes and culture. Seizing judgment and active listening promoted participant dialogue, allowing the interviews to continue in a structured manner to identify themes and connections as participant realities emerged. The open-ended nature of questioning, coupled with a responsive interviewing style navigated dialogue, allowing further insight and depth to be gained. The interviews enhanced my knowledge and seized tacit knowledge from employees.

To counter my own bias, I used journaling throughout the research project. It proved particularly beneficial during the data collection stages. Journaling was something that I had not done before. To help structure the journaling process, I adopted Schien's (1999; 2013) ORJI model (Observation, Reaction, Judgment and Intervention) (see Appendix C). It helped guide reflexivity through personal introspection and promoted self-awareness through meta-analysis that helped me think about my research actions.

The process helped me to question myself and my interpretations based on my actual experiences, thoughts and observations. Journaling opened my cognitive channels to reflect and return to what I had written, continuously. Journaling allowed me to make sense of and question my initial interpretations of the environment, the people within it and myself. It helped me gain a better understanding of employee's responses and reactions to change and separate any personal bias. While going through this process, I frequently had many thoughts and opinions as to how I would like to address the work-based problem. Journaling also allowed me to structure my thought process, remain focused and within the scope of the primary research question. The journaling process acted as a database allowing me to categorise and question my thoughts, concerns, interpretations, understanding and bias

More frequently I found myself in situations where I would write a note based on my interpretation and how I would respond to address an issue. There was always an element of curiosity from participants, particularly during observations and post semi-structured interviews as to what I was writing. The curiosity was justified, and I found myself in a position that if I shared what I was documenting, it might impair the validity of the research as participants may be put off or may alter their behaviour. As I reflected on the situation, I asked myself, 'Wouldn't I want to know if I was a participant?', 'Do I not have a right to know?' 'Is what is written going to affect my role or position?', and 'Whom is this

information going to be given to?’ I decided the best thing to do was to explain the journaling process and how it assisted me to question my core beliefs and values and how it could help me address the central research question. I also explained that journaling gives me, as a novice action researcher, a better appreciation of how I am currently viewing a scenario, and without it, I would find it difficult to remember and question my perspective. It allows me ‘to see what I see’ and question it. If I question what I see through journaling, I can potentially change my original interpretation and view the same scenario from a different perspective.

Not that I practised journaling before, but in the past, I am not convinced I would have taken the time to explain something of this nature. This was an important observation I had made of myself and proved beneficial through other cycles and is proving beneficial today. That is both journaling and developing tolerance and the capacity to explain to others. In this respect, Kolb’s cycle (1984) assisted in processing experiences, engaging in real reflection, conceptualisation and deciding on what actions to take based on my reflections. The experiences heightened my self-awareness as a researcher, who sometimes felt like an outsider. With the circumstance mentioned above, not sharing my journal entries was purely related to my role as a researcher and to maintain integrity.

When engaging in non-participant observation, there was an expectation that I would interject or say something. It was tempting to do so, and I wondered whether my presence stimulated something. Did the team make a collective decision to deliberately boast and exaggerate the situation to demonstrate how bad a situation is, or is it always actually like this? I felt the need to enter the prey, but I refrained, remembering that I am an outside observer and I do not want to impair the integrity of the research. I also reminded myself that I was observing the team at different times over some weeks, so what I witness initially may not frequently occur. I reminded myself not to engage. Otherwise, it would be overstepping the researcher-participant boundary. I reminded myself that I could not act as a facilitator as this could shape the attitudes of those being observed. I did feel at times that there were a few participants that did not want me to interject or say something in any case. I felt that they thought my presence meant nothing and that what I was doing had no value. Although technically I was not part of the team and at times felt unsupported, I tried reminding myself of the bigger picture.

Ultimately, I decided that I would not share this incident as it would probably cause more disruption and not help the situation as somebody may feel exposed, awkward or embarrassed which could cause harm at a later stage during the study or beyond. This is something that had occurred earlier in the research process. Moving forward, I would remind myself of this incident. It helped me to remember my role as an

action-researcher, a person who is an actor in the process, playing a particular part, that should not take anything for granted. I felt this was a valuable life lesson to be learned.

Reflection is powerful, and the experience became a foundation and motivation for my methodologies, questioning my ideologies and withdrawing my bias to safeguard the integrity and rigour of the data analysis. This episode symbolised an experience that may guide my personal development from an internal consultant to management–practitioner as it taught me another way to deal with and act within the world. I felt my response was appropriate and elevated practical knowing. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) and Lonergan (1992) arrive at a similar juncture surrounding their findings on the premise of practical knowing. Practical knowing or common sense knowing is different from scientific knowing in that it tends to be more extemporaneous, while the latter is more logical and systematic. To validate practical knowing as an integral ingredient of the formal action research process is essential to authenticate findings while at the same time maintaining the application of relevance and rigour (Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

While pure scientific research may sometimes detach the human aspect to its research, I do feel there is a place for journaling. For example, it can add as much credibility and rigour if done over time. I found encompassing a human aspect added tremendous value to findings related to the research journey and results. I learned, and I am still learning that findings from other people allow interpreting data differently which adds credibility to the research. For research management science, humans become the subject and therefore are a critical component to help make sense of the world through interaction, observation and documentation (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

Another challenge that presented itself to me was the shifting of roles as an inside action researcher. I found myself having to switch psychologically from an organisation member, researcher and internal consultant. Putting on ‘different hats’ to work for the benefit of the practitioner and academic communities challenged me with regard to the language to use in the organisation, both verbal, non-verbal and written and the language to use when writing the thesis. Mentally, I found myself being pulled in different directions and trying to figure out how to perform each role successfully. Finding some sort of balance took time, and as time went on, I learned to adjust myself to fit the respective roles. However, through continuous reflection, I began to realise that overthinking the expected behaviours for each role was causing much confusion also. So, while still respecting each of the role boundaries, I introduced a sense of ‘letting things happen’. It relaxed my approach, physically and mentally. It allowed me to further question my reality through reflection and reflexivity. As a result, I was beginning to understand myself

more, and I was becoming more mindful of my approach and how I was being perceived. The entire process continues to be very humbling.

I noticed that the knock-on effect of considering the perceptions of others towards me and the ‘letting things happen’ approach improved the quality of relationships with different actors and audiences. Engagements were becoming more fruitful, leading to developing shared judgements and values as defensive routines of participants and stakeholders also became more relaxed. When I reflected on this further, I realised I was becoming more politically savvy and astute. I was learning how to ‘play the game’. This became beneficial as the project progressed as I could identify and recognise who the political players were at different levels and how they could add value to the research through their participation.

### 6.5 Reflections on My Role as an Action-Researcher

From the early stages as an insider action researcher, I experienced a distance between myself and the research participants. The question that I always asked myself was: How I, as a novice action research practitioner, could be useful? Despite following professional and academic protocol, I realised that it did not necessarily equate to an accessible path to obtain information. This questioned my assumptions regarding the cooperation of participants. As I reflected further on this point, I realised that there was an additional responsibility on my part to explain to participants from the outset, that their collective insight and experience of the previous change initiative is the primary substance for the study.

Throughout the cycles, I became more aware and conscious of how I was potentially perceived. To help me understand, I tried to place myself in the context of the participants viewing me. I wrote down in my journal how I thought I was perceived. When I read over my notes, I realised that participants perceived me as an outsider, particularly after the initial engagement. I thought I would be perceived differently. This process challenged my perspective, habits and expectations. Although not explicitly communicated, I felt I was being criticised. It required further reflection on my part. I began by reading through academic and professional literature to see if practitioner-researchers had experienced anything similar. Continuous feedback from the action researcher was a common theme that emerged from the literature to help gain closure with participants. This involves opening channels of communication, a good Socratic teacher of sorts (Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

As part of this ‘opening up’ process, I learned that a more pragmatic approach was required. To open up, I had a responsibility to initiate a dialogical exchange and communicate the need for me to learn from participant experiences, and how feedback from participants could result in alternative strategies to



improving change implementation for future change initiatives. I found that communicating ‘I am here to support you morally also’ and presenting information from previous cases experiencing similar problems where change worked, helped in building trust with participants. I mentioned to participants how their insight into local practice, economic relationships and capabilities would be appreciated for the benefit of the organisation. In that respect, I acknowledged within myself and communicated to participants that I am an outsider—following this strategy to ‘open up’ to ‘let me in’ proved rewarding.

I found following a more pragmatic approach helped to build trusting relationships, enhance cogenerative learning and kept the conversation going (Greenwood and Levin, 2007, p.133). Respecting and practising a pragmatic approach proved highly beneficial. The investment made in building relationships with participants laid the foundation for constructing arenas for dialogue during the semi-structured interviews and FGDs. I was beginning to realise from my little experience of engaging in action research, that there was no strict recipe for an action researcher to follow. I was beginning to realise that the emergent, reflective and reflexive nature of action research is the cornerstone for growth and development that helps action researchers understand or interpret social context.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) indicate that as a researcher one should recognise and prevent potential bias. This was challenging at times, as the urge to shed my own experiences was present. To help mitigate and neutralise my bias, I found, in addition to journaling, utilising a pragmatic action research approach helpful. The approach helped to equalise status, present participants, key stakeholders, senior management and leadership community members the opportunity naturally to open up. This allowed parties to appreciate each other’s experience and skill set. It allowed open and frank conversations that also questioned my skills and experience. From this perspective, all participants involved throughout the research process felt they were able to answer questions and engage in dialogue that they believed to be socially acceptable (Shedlin *et al.*, 2011, p.354).

Following a pragmatic approach to action, research helped to reduce social desirability bias during interviews (Shedlin *et al.*, 2011). I had rephrased questions, thus displayed acceptability for participants to answer in ways that are not socially desirable. I found it allowed participants to share personal feelings and accurate accounts of lived experiences. I found this approach also maintained the integrity of participants, which was further bolstered through me realising the importance of indeed opening up and sometimes engaging in playful exchanges. This helped me as a scholar-practitioner and participants overcome inherent uncertainties. One of the critical lessons I had learned throughout the action research project was to look at this process from the participants’ perspective. It was a valuable lesson moving forward. I continuously reflected on this and thought, in a like for like scenario; I would probably like to

know that a 'real person is present'. I learned that knowing that you are talking to a real person gives a sense of security and confidence that can benefit either or both parties.

## 6.6 Study Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

Brutus, Aguinis and Wassmer (2013) regard limitations in research as prospective difficulties that could influence the outcomes of the study. One limitation of the study was that it was conducted in a specific geographical area, in a specific industry and sector. The results, therefore, may only correlate with other telecommunication companies experiencing similar challenges in this specific region and may not apply to other industries or organisations within the same geographical area. The second limitation was related to the scope of the study. A total of 12 research participants were interviewed during the study. It represented 5% of the total number of employees. In that capacity, the question of whether the viewpoints and experiences is representative of all employees is valid. However, there was a consensus from senior managers and senior leaders that the findings widely represented the central issues in the organisation and were valid. The third limitation, which is related to the second limitation, is associated with the number of middle managers that were interviewed. The middle managers that were interviewed were those who contributed to previous change efforts. While the findings highlighted essential functions of middle management who were supportive of changes at Telco DWML, there were no interviews with middle-managers from other departments who either supported or did not support changes. Therefore, the possibility to validate data from them associated with behaviour and actions did not exist. In that capacity, further research is needed that focuses on middle management in Telco DWML to validate the study findings and accordingly can be qualified to all Telco DWML middle managers.

Recommendations for future studies comprises supplementary qualitative and quantitative research to measure outcomes of the recommended change implementation strategies. Extended qualitative research on post-change implementation outcomes specific to such organisations may bestow additional knowledge surrounding the effectiveness of communication, participation and involvement, learning and development, and leadership in strategic change implementation. Conducting quantitative research may highlight different strategic change implementation strategies. Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012) mention that a quantitative study allows determining the frequency of different elements of recommended strategies. For example, the frequency of every change-related communication may help to determine the possible correlation between types of communication to the outcome of change implementation. Conducting a quantitative study may also allow determining when pieces of training took place and the types and number of training that were conducted that may prove beneficial in developing the findings that training is crucial to improve the success of strategic change implementation.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Interview Questions

The purpose of this protocol procedure is to establish that each face-to-face interview follows the same exact set-up process. Further, the document ensures that all steps required for preparation that are necessary for each interview follow a set process at the beginning of each face-to-face meeting. The interviewees will consist of employees in 'Mobile' who have experienced change initiatives in Telco DWML.

**Informed Consent Form Completed:****Time of Interview:****Date:****Interviewer:****Interviewee:****Position of Interviewee:****Protocol:**

1. Complete introductions.
2. Present consent form, go over contents, answer questions and concerns of participant(s).
3. Give participant copy of signed consent form.
4. Introduce participant(s) using a pseudonym/coded identification; note location, time & date.
5. Begin the interview with question # 1; continue through to the final question.
6. Follow up with additional questions.
7. End interview; discuss methodological triangulation and member checking procedures with the participant(s).
8. Thank participant(s) for their participation in the study. Discuss contact numbers for any follow-up questions and concerns by participants.
10. End protocol.

**Interview Questions:**

Question 1: What are your opinions regarding the previous change program the organisation rolled out?

Question 2: How was the introduction and implementation of the change communicated?

Question 3: How have employees reacted to the changes in the department?

Question 4: What threat(s) were considered when planning for the previous change initiative?

Question 5: What opportunities emerged when planning for the previous change initiative?

Question 6: How would you describe the weaknesses of the previous change program with relation to the impact on the current operating model?

Question 7: How would you describe the strength(s) of the current system and processes?

Question 8: In what way do you feel the change program has affected employee morale and or Job Satisfaction? Why do you feel that?

Question 9: What risk(s) do you believe a new change initiative may face concerning the external environment?

Question 10: What advantage(s), do you think the new change initiative may offer for the organisation to capitalise on?

Question 11: Is there anything else that you would like to share about the previous change program or the newly announced change?

## Appendix B: Non-participant observation worksheet

**Date:**

**Area being observed:**

**Who or What is being Observed:**

**Timeframe:**

**Three-stage funnel Process:**

Document Anecdotal Observations:

Focused Observation|

Selected Observation:

## Appendix C: Journal Template

**DBA Journal Entry:**

**Note to self:** Depth, detail, nuance and richness.  
Ask – Active Listening , share, care, dare and be aware.  
Display empathy, sensitivity, be non-judgmental, display assertiveness when required.  
Maintain balance in speech, behaviour and approach

**Date:**

**Time:**

Observation:

Reaction:

Judgment:

Intervention:

## Appendix D: Authorisation from Telco DWML

Name of Organisation:

Organisation Contact Information:

Date:

Dear Tarun Inamdar,

I confirm that I am authorised to approve research in this setting. Based on my review of your research proposal and the request for cooperation, I give permission for you to conduct the study in the (Name of Organisation). As part of this study, I authorise you to select and interview participants as needed based on the criteria of the research proposal.

I further authorise you to communicate with selected participants throughout the duration of the study for research purposes only. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team. I understand individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. Interview information and individuals should remain confidential and research data can only be used for research purposes. In addition, I authorise taking field notes throughout the research.

Sincerely,

Authorisation Official

## Appendix E: Individual Consent Form



## Committee on Research Ethics

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

<b>Title of Research Project:</b>	<b>What strategies can be used by Telco DWML to Improve Employee Morale and Job Satisfaction during organisational change?</b>	
<b>Researcher(s):</b>	<b>Tarun Inamdar</b>	<b>Please initial box</b>
1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated [DATE] for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.		<input type="text"/>
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.		<input type="text"/>
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.		<input type="text"/>
4. I agree to take part in the above study.		<input type="text"/>

_____ Name of Person taking consent	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Researcher	_____ Date	_____ Signature

**Principal Investigator:**  
 Name: Tarun Inamdar  
 Telephone: +353 (0) 87 69 20 426  
 Email: [tarun.inamdar@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:tarun.inamdar@online.liverpool.ac.uk)

## Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet



**Participant Information Sheet**  
(Version 1, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017)

**1. Title of Study**

What strategies can be used by Telco DWML to Improve Employee Morale and Job Satisfaction during organisational change?

**2. Invitation Paragraph**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask us if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. You may, if you so please, feel free to discuss this with any of your work colleagues. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to. The researcher is an Independent Management Consultant, providing a professional service to this firm. The research being undertaken is part of the researchers study for a Doctor of Business Administration dissertation for his private studies.

**3. What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to explore strategies leaders of change at Telco DWML can consider to improve employee morale and job satisfaction during organisational change. The feedback gained from those who participate in the study, will be used to answer how previous change management decisions made by leaders, could have influenced employee morale and job satisfaction. By conducting this study, the expected actionable outcome may help current leaders of change in the client system to increase employee morale and job satisfaction.

**4. Why you have been chosen to take part?**

Only those that are part of the 'Mobile' team will be involved in the study. You have been chosen as a valuable participant for this study. It is believed that you are in a position to provide the relevant information that is being sought. Your professional knowledge, individual values, beliefs, experiences and understanding of the topic under study makes you an important potential informant for the study.

**5. Do you have to take part?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to decline, withdraw at any time, for any reason, if you so wish, without explanation and without incurring a disadvantage.

## 6. What will happen if you take part?

The research method will be a qualitative case study. The study will be undertaken by a student researcher from the University of Liverpool. For this study, there will be two data collection processes. These are:

- 1) Non – Participant Observation. This is where the researcher will observe participants in the 'Mobile' team without interfering with the team being observed. The purpose of non-participant observation is to try make sense of the environment in which participants operate and to observe the social interaction & behavioural responses that participants have towards tasks and towards one another.
- 2) Semi – structured, open ended interview. This will take place in a meeting room, onsite, that may last between 45-75 minutes. The purpose of the interview(s) is to gain participant perspective regarding the previous change initiative and how it may have impacted employee morale & job satisfaction. The interview will consist of:
  - a) 11 open – ended questions to gain your understanding, perception and experience of the previous change initiative that took place in Telco DWML.
  - b) If required, there may be further interviews to gain clarity for the researcher or for the participant to share further information.

For both data collection activities, the researcher will be taking handwritten notes.  
**There will be no electronic / audio / visual recordings.**

The data collected during non – participant observation and interview(s) will be used in the study to try and answer how previous change management decisions made by leaders, could have influenced employee morale and job satisfaction. By conducting this study, the expected actionable outcome may help current leaders of change in the client system to increase employee morale and job satisfaction.

## 7. Expenses and / or payments

The research study will take place on site during working hours of the workplace. Therefore, you will not be financially compensated or incur any direct expense for participating in the study. Non – participant observation will take place as participants are partaking in their daily activities. However, it is recognised that the study will occupy your time during the interview phase of the data collection. Consequently, you may need to work outside your usual office tasks. Interview sessions should last between 30 – 45 minutes.

## 8. Are there any risks in taking part?

There are no obvious risks for participants participating in this study, and all participants will be fully briefed on the purpose and aim of the research.

Possibilities may arise during the open-ended, semi – structured interview process that can potentially make participants feel some discomfort. Another potential risk could relate to the timing of interviews and the conflict this may cause with

participants work schedule, work routine and work productivity. The following measures will be put in place to avert the risks mentioned.

**Scheduling and Interviews:** To minimise disruption to participants daily work activities, all interviews will be held on site and scheduled based on participants availability. To maintain privacy and transparency, all interviews will be one on one and held in meeting rooms that are on an open floor.

**Informed consent:** All participants must sign a consent form agreeing that the researcher has highlighted:

- a) The purpose of the research.
- b) That participants have been given the opportunity to ask any questions related to the research.
- c) How data for the study will be collected.
- d) Any data gathered can only be used in the study with the participant's permission, which can only be achieved by the participant signing the informed consent form.
- e) The right for the participant to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason.

**Confidentiality:** Any information gathered during non-participant observation and interview process will remain protected with privacy intact & confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Gathered information will only be accessible to the researcher.

**Anonymous:** All participants will remain anonymous and labelled as Participant A (PA), Participant B (PB) and so forth throughout the study.

**N.B:** You do not have to waive any of your legal rights in the study.

#### **9. Are there any benefits in taking part?**

There will be no direct benefit or compensation to you as an individual for participating in the study. However, the study is dependent on your honest conduct during the non – participant observation process. The study is also dependent on your honest feedback during the semi – structured, open – ended interview(s). This will facilitate in reaching the objectives of the research to explore strategies to improve employee morale and work satisfaction during organisational change.

#### **10. What if you are unhappy or if there is a problem?**

Participation in the study is voluntary. Participants can withdraw at any time for any reason even if the study is in progress. If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, you may contact the researcher at any time to try and resolve the issue(s). If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel cannot be resolved or communicated to the researcher, then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at [ethics@liv.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@liv.ac.uk). When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make. If you

so wish, the researcher can be directly contacted at the following number and email address:

Tarun Inamdar,  
Tel: +353 87 69 20 426  
E-mail: [tarun.inamdar@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:tarun.inamdar@online.liverpool.ac.uk)

**11. Will your participation be kept confidential?**

The data for this study shall be collected through non – participant observation and interview(s). The non – participant observation will take place during the working day. Interviews will take place separately on a one on one basis, in meeting rooms, onsite. All data collected will remain confidential and securely stored. Any soft copy of data will be stored on a password protected laptop, which will be stored in a lockable cabinet. Any hard data collected will also be stored in a lockable cabinet. Both hard and soft copies of data will only be accessible by the researcher. The identity of participants will remain anonymous for this study and for any potential future publications and reports. The information gathered will only be used for the purpose of the study. No information will be forwarded to third parties.

**12. What will happen to the results of the study?**

The results of the study shall be reflected in a report that shall detail the problem statement, the results of the research and the recommendations. The results are expected to aid Telco DWML explore strategies to improve employee morale and work satisfaction during organisational change. If the participant wishes, the results of the study shall be made available to them. Your contribution shall remain anonymous unless specified otherwise.

**13. What will happen if you want to stop taking part?**

You can withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, without explanation. The results up to the period of your withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them.

**14. Who can you contact if you have further questions?**

In case you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact the researcher either by Mobile or Email:

Tarun Inamdar,  
Tel: +353 87 69 20 426  
E-mail: [tarun.inamdar@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:tarun.inamdar@online.liverpool.ac.uk)



## Appendix G: Permission Request to Conduct Research on Premises

To: Department Head  
From: Tarun Inamdar, University of Liverpool Doctoral Candidate  
Date: 4/04/2017  
Subject: Permission to Perform Research on Premises  
**Permission to Perform Research on Premises**  
Dear Department Head:

My name is Tarun Inamdar. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Business and Administration at University of Liverpool. I am currently in the final stages of my doctoral program, which involves performing research and completing my dissertation. My dissertation focuses on improving employee morale and job satisfaction during organisational change.

My purpose in writing is to request your approval to conduct research on the premise of the organisation. Research will include contacting participants for this study. Your permission would include allowing access to seek volunteers to participate in the study, while taking field notes that align with the topic of the study. Specifically, the study involves administering interviews with employees of 'Mobile', on-site and work with key stakeholders that may contribute to outcome of the dissertation. All information, field notes, interviews, or data collected remain confidential at all times.

As the Department Head you reserve the right to withdraw the Department from the study at any time if circumstances change. Employee participation in the study is voluntary, and informed consent forms will be issued and signed by each participant if they choose to participate.

The results of this study could be of benefit to the business as developing realistic management strategies during times of change could improve employee morale and job satisfaction. These strategies could be used in an effort to improve and encourage frontline employee involvement and engagement in change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. If this arrangement is agreeable, please confirm your approval via a return letter of cooperation with your signature.

Thank you in advance for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,  
Tarun Inamdar

## Appendix H: Ethical Approval from the University of Liverpool

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Higgins, David <[David.Higgins@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:David.Higgins@liverpool.ac.uk)>

Date: Thu, Jul 6, 2017 at 9:11 AM

Subject: DBA Ethics Committee 12th of June 2017 - Tarun Inamdar

To: tarun\_contact <[tarun.inamdar@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:tarun.inamdar@online.liverpool.ac.uk)>

Cc: Dionisia Tzavara <[dionisia.tzavara@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:dionisia.tzavara@online.liverpool.ac.uk)>, Hamed Shamma <[hamed.shamma@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:hamed.shamma@online.liverpool.ac.uk)>, Hefin Rowlands <[hefin.rowlands@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:hefin.rowlands@online.liverpool.ac.uk)>, Barbara Wilczek <[barbara.wilczek@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:barbara.wilczek@online.liverpool.ac.uk)>, "alen.Badal@online.liverpool.ac.uk" <[alen.Badal@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:alen.Badal@online.liverpool.ac.uk)>, "Higgins, David" <[David.Higgins@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:David.Higgins@liverpool.ac.uk)>

Dear Tarun Inamdar,

I am writing to you on behalf of the DBA Research Ethics Committee. I am pleased to confirm that you have obtained research ethics approval for your work. By copy of this email I invite your Doctoral Thesis Supervisor to complete the associated section in the grade center of your Thesis BB class (please, see attached file with guidelines to complete the process, and if you have any questions do let me know). Additionally, I am attaching the formal approval from the research ethics committee for your records.

My best wishes for an interesting and successful DBA research project.

Kind Regards,

David

Dear Tarun Inamdar,

I am pleased to inform you that the DBA Ethics Committee has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below:

Committee Name: DBA Ethics Committee

Title of Study: What strategies can be used by Telco DWML to Improve Employee Morale and Job Satisfaction during organisational change?

Student Investigator: Tarun Inamdar

School/Institute: School of Management Approval Date: 6th of July 2017. The application was

APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. The researchers must obtain ethical approval from a local research ethics committee if this is an international study
2. University of Liverpool approval is subject to compliance with all relevant national legislative requirements if this this is an international study.
3. All serious adverse events must be reported to the Sub-Committee within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the Research Integrity and Governance Officer ([ethics@liv.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@liv.ac.uk))
4. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Committee of the amendment.

This approval applies to the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Committee should be notified.

Kind regards,

David Higgins

DBA Ethics Committee University of Liverpool Management School in Partnership

## Appendix I: Code Template

No.	Theme/Code	Sub-theme	Representative Quotes
1	Communication		
		Messages	<p>"One of the slogans was "Get ready for change."" (P3)</p> <p>"There was different message, all centred on change and remaining competitive." (P6)</p> <p>"One of the messages was focusing on efficiency." (FGP2)</p> <p>"A lot of the messages were about productivity, performance, efficiency." (FGP1)</p>
		Channels	<p>"There were not sufficient channels of communication." (P7)</p> <p>"There needs to be adequate two-way communication in the future." (FGP3)</p> <p>"There were not enough channels of communication to explain what was happening, why it was happening, and how it was going to happen." (P1)</p> <p>"We need to have committees and structure and accordingly disseminate information via the intranet site, blogs and emails, in the future" (P9)</p> <p>"There were no feedback mechanisms in place, everything was dependent on who you knew, or the goodwill of people." (FGDP2)</p>
		Management of Communication	<p>"I was never to sure of the changes until I was told by senior management." (FGP1)</p> <p>"I tried to inform staff as much as possible and when it was possible, based on the information I had gathered." (FGP2)</p>
2	Participation and Involvement		
		Staff Engagement	<p>"I am convinced management did not consider having us involved in any decisions." (P8)</p> <p>"I never got the impression that we were working together during the previous change." (FGP1)</p> <p>"We were never really consulted." (P2)</p> <p>"There should have been townhall sessions to bring people together and to inform staff." (FGDP3)</p> <p>"There was never anything in place to gain buy-in for the changes. It also felt like decisions were already made anyway." (P5)</p>
		Concerns and Resistance	<p>"The previous change was not well communicated; it raised a lot of concern and my first reaction was that of fear. I did not have context and was not sure what would change and to what extent." (P4)</p> <p>"The resistance from some directors did not help the situation. It impacted how messages would pervade through the different management layers." (FGP2)</p>

		Management of Staff Participation	<p>"I wanted to engage team members but I had limited information. I was also very busy trying to fulfil my managers requests with little support." (FGP1)</p> <p>"I did not see the value in having team members participate in something that I was unclear about. Whatever information I had, was HR related and I could not share that information." (FGP2)</p>
		Workforce Trust	<p>"The way the previous change was handled makes it difficult to trust management in any capacity in the future." (P3)</p> <p>"It will be difficult to regain my trust after the way we were treated." (P6)</p> <p>"There less trust now than before." (P8)</p>
3	Learning and Development		
		Corporate Learning Agenda	<p>"There is no real learning agenda for us." (P5)</p> <p>"There was some training related to our jobs, but it was all optional." (P2)</p> <p>"There was some effort made by HR to develop a training programme for managers after the survey results." (FGP3)</p> <p>"A lot of training is provided for directors; they even have off-site sessions." (FGP1)</p> <p>"I think training for team members and managers needs some focus in the future." (FGP3)</p>
		Management of Learning	<p>"There is a dedicated budget for training now. This has happened after the survey results revealed the importance of training and learning." (FGP2)</p> <p>"I would be great if we could provide feedback on the type of training required and highlight what would be beneficial to advance in our roles, based on the challenges we face every day." (P7)</p> <p>"We need to have a culture that support learning, particularly on topics that are relevant to different groups of people." (FGP3)</p>
4	Leadership		
		Visionary	<p>"Our CEO is a visionary, that is a plus point." (P9)</p> <p>"There is one thing, our CEO is a visionary, and that is good, but I would say is not the most inspirational or charismatic individual." (FGP2)</p> <p>"I believe to be inspirational; you need demonstrate in your message why it is important to work together, regardless of what level you might be." (FGP1)</p> <p>"Charisma and the ability to inspire should not be underestimated." (FGP3)</p>
		Strategic	<p>"There was no real strategic leadership." (FGP2)</p> <p>"Decisions were made and we were expected to execute without having enough insight." (FGP3)</p>

	Facilitative	"There was never regular meeting with our managers to see how we were being challenged, what concerns we had, or if there is something positive, we wanted to communicate." (P2) "Our managers were never available for us, so we never got a good grasp on how to convert vision to action." (FGP3)
	Collective	"We did not always know what was happening, and having a structure in place that included managers from different levels would help in communicating future changes. (P6) "Transparency was an issue in the last change agenda. We need to promote more transparency." (FGP1)
	Decision Making	"It would be great if there was some governance structure or architecture in place surrounding decisions made." (FGDP2) "If there is anything to learn from last time, it is to be part of the decision-making process. That ideally is what is required." (FGP1) "The issue with this company is that decisions get made, we are not informed, or decisions are not made or made in a rush and it always backfires." (P5)

\*Template including new themes and sub-codes added during the analysis that were not included in the original list of codes

## Appendix J: Leadership Competency Definition

Leadership Competency	Definition
Leadership	A true leader motivates, inspires and gains support from others through mutual trust without the need to rely on hierarchy and authority. Provides a compelling vision which motivates others to work towards team goals, setting clear objectives and holding people to account for results. Encourages and offers support to others in challenging situations. Enables staff to improve their performance and develop the capability of people.
Leading Change	Understands the need for change and embraces change in a positive manner. Communicates the vision for change by engaging and facilitating others to work collaboratively to achieve real change. Seeks out opportunities to effect change to improve organisational performance. Develops self and others to respond effectively to change communicating change clearly to all those around them.
Organisational & Strategic Perspective	Clearly sees the bigger picture and demonstrates an in depth knowledge of how their role supports the achievement of organisational objectives and. Creates clear strategies which take into account the external and political context to maximise the opportunity to add value to the community and support economic growth.
Winning Commitment	Builds positive and trusting relationships with colleagues, partners and customers to get business done. Develops internal and external networks which enable business to be delivered in an efficient and effective way. Encourages collaboration and commitment with various stakeholders to deliver the best service.
Analysis and Decision Making	Identifying the key issues, breaking down problems and establishing facts. Using sound judgement to make informed decisions which take into account financial/resource management and the local/wider economy and markets. Creating evidence based strategies and plans which take into account different options, benefits, risks and solutions to make effective decisions even in time critical situations.
Creativity & Innovation	Standing back from the detail, taking a broader perspective and developing new ideas to take the organisation forward. Creating strategies and plans which take into account innovative, new approaches which are being trailed in other sectors and industries.
Delivering Results	Being energetic and tenacious in the achievement of goals. Takes initiatives which often involve calculated risks and demonstrates the personal drive to do things better, more effectively, and in a way that exceeds goals and targets. It includes looking for new challenges and not being satisfied with the status quo but not making change for change's sake.

## Appendix K: Leadership

Leadership	
<b>Definition:</b> A true leader motivates, inspires and gains support from others through mutual trust without the need to rely on hierarchy and authority. Provides a compelling vision which motivates others to work towards team goals, setting clear objectives and holding people to account for results. Encourages and offers support to others in challenging situations. Enables staff to improve their performance and develop the capability of people.	
<b>Link to Strategy:</b> Strong leadership supports the delivery of excellent organisational performance. By creating clarity of direction and a common vision leaders can enhance the future performance of their team	
<b>Competency Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leads from the front communicating and motivating people towards stretching goals</li> <li>Takes responsibility for the delivery of the service outcomes</li> <li>Clarifies strategies and plans giving a clear sense of purpose and direction to the team</li> <li>Makes it clear who is responsible for what and how results will be measured</li> <li>Visible to staff and stakeholders undertaking activities to engage and build trust with people</li> <li>Promotes the work of the team and plays an active part in supporting the organisations values and behaviours</li> <li>Keeps teams informed of progress and shows how their contribution supports the delivery of the corporate strategy</li> <li>Identifies and nurtures talent throughout their area to improve organisational performance</li> <li>Recognises, respects and rewards the contribution and achievements of others</li> <li>Uses a broad range of leadership styles to achieve results</li> <li>Maintains personal development to keep up to date with modern/current leadership</li> <li>Maintains morale and motivation during times of uncertainty remaining positive and upbeat</li> <li>Confronts unacceptable behaviour openly and acts to correct it</li> <li>Deals with performance issues identifying areas for improvement and action</li> </ul>	
<b>Contra Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inappropriately uses status to manage others</li> <li>Adopts a 'Do as I say, not as I do' approach</li> <li>Gives the team total freedom and no guidance</li> <li>Operates independently with little communication</li> <li>Lacks awareness of different agendas and motivations of others</li> <li>Team members left to cope with difficult situations on their own</li> <li>Doesn't display a one team ethos</li> <li>Steps back and lets the team deal with difficult situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Takes the credit for others' achievements</li> <li>Gives in readily when challenged</li> <li>Unable to translate, articulate and inspire people</li> <li>Overlooks opportunities to champion achievements of others</li> <li>Doesn't tailor the messages to the audience</li> <li>No awareness of the impact of their behaviours on others</li> <li>Avoids challenging underperformance/inappropriate behaviour</li> <li>Doesn't take responsibility for corporate issues</li> <li>Lack of visibility</li> </ul>

## Appendix L: Leading Change

Leading Change	
<b>Definition:</b> Understands the need for change and embraces change in a positive manner. Communicates the vision for change by engaging and facilitating others to work collaboratively to achieve real change. Seeks out opportunities to effect change to improve organisational performance. Develops self and others to respond effectively to change communicating change clearly to all those around them.	
<b>Link to Strategy:</b> Effective management of change is a significant contributor to organisational performance. By creating an environment where change becomes the norm allows others to be more flexible and responsive to change and minimises the disruption that change can have on the workplace.	
<b>Competency Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognises and accepts the need for change and communicates this in a positive way</li> <li>• Effectively uses change management processes to implement change</li> <li>• Monitors progress on the delivery of change in their area delivering results that are aligned to the corporate strategy.</li> <li>• Gains buy in and commitment to the change through effective consultation and communication processes</li> <li>• Provides staff with a belief that change is achievable and their contribution matters</li> <li>• Inspires staff to contribute to and lead on change initiatives within and outside of their area</li> <li>• Communicates a consistent message to keep all relevant parties informed of change and why there is the need for change</li> <li>• Builds support and commitment to change through their leadership style</li> <li>• Takes accountability for the wider implications of change beyond their own area of responsibility</li> <li>• Finds ways to make new ideas and systems work and implements them in a positive way</li> <li>• Identifies barriers and obstacles to change and works to remove them</li> <li>• Networks with stakeholders to generate ideas and explore change opportunities</li> </ul>	
<b>Contra Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fails to provide clarity and direction</li> <li>• Fails to step up to the leadership role</li> <li>• Passes the buck when faced with leadership responsibility</li> <li>• Delivers inconsistent messages to the team</li> <li>• Provides reasons why change cannot be implemented</li> <li>• Says 'but we have always done it this way'</li> <li>• Delivers uncontrolled change that is counter to delivery, too much or is not well thought through</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not find ways around obstacles/barriers to deliver the change</li> <li>• Doesn't use change management processes to implement change</li> <li>• Does not act as a positive role model towards change</li> <li>• Works in a silo type way to deliver change</li> <li>• Does not take on a wider perspective to change, narrow perspective</li> <li>• Intolerance to failure</li> </ul>



## Appendix M: Organisational and Strategic Perspective

Organisational and Strategic Perspective	
<b>Definition:</b> Clearly sees the bigger picture and demonstrates an in depth knowledge of how their role supports the achievement of organisational objectives. Creates clear strategies which take into account the external and political context to maximise the opportunity to add value to the community and support economic growth.	
<b>Link to Strategy:</b> Being able to see the bigger picture and develop strategies which take into account the external and political environment contributes to the achievement of the corporate strategy and the longer term vision. It also enables the organisation to anticipate challenges, understand the changing political environment and put in place plans to ensure that the organisation continues to deliver on its corporate strategy.	
<b>Competency Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the organisational structure, objectives and priorities to ensure there is joined up thinking across service areas</li> <li>• Actively seeks out information to understand how different services work and how they link to the corporate strategy</li> <li>• Translates and communicates corporate objectives in a practical way to the team to enhance overall performance</li> <li>• Focuses on the overall goal of what the team is looking to achieve rather than the task</li> <li>• Challenges the status quo in own and other service areas to drive organisational improvement</li> <li>• Focuses on delivering the longer term strategic priorities aligning short term objectives to longer term plans</li> <li>• Develops an understanding of the wider issues and the impact this will have</li> <li>• Recognises when policy/legislation is in conflict with service priorities and challenges to effect change</li> <li>• Regularly reviews policy, process and procedures in line with the corporate vision to improve delivery</li> <li>• Identifies issues/trends which may impact or benefit own team's work</li> <li>• Understands the priorities of other areas to identify opportunities for partnership/efficient service delivery</li> <li>• Able to appreciate political driven decision making in the context of the organisation/service</li> <li>• Able to drive service delivery in highly political situations</li> </ul>	
<b>Contra Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the task rather than the overall goal</li> <li>• Fails to take into account the wider perspective</li> <li>• Does not consider how their work impacts on other areas</li> <li>• Adopts a 'one size fits all' approach to work</li> <li>• Lacks insight into the political context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes a short term view</li> <li>• Is narrow and siloed in approach</li> <li>• Lacks interest/commitment in gaining wider understanding of other stakeholders</li> <li>• Significant focus on own team delivery with little regard for other areas</li> <li>• Fails to take into account changes in the external environment</li> </ul>

## Appendix N: Winning Commitment

Winning Commitment	
<b>Definition:</b> Builds positive and trusting relationships with colleagues, partners and customers to get business done. Develops internal and external networks which enable business to be delivered in an efficient and effective way. Encourages collaboration and commitment with various stakeholders to deliver.	
<b>Link to Strategy:</b> Being able to win the hearts and minds of colleagues, focusing their efforts on the delivery of the corporate strategy is key to success. Influencing is critical in a diverse organisation which delivers a variety of different services and adopts a variety of different service delivery models to deliver service.	
<b>Competency Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses proposals based on factual data and information to convince others</li> <li>• Retains belief in their proposal even when facing opposition from more powerful others</li> <li>• Adapts the content, style, message and tone of interaction to the needs and preferences of the audience</li> <li>• Sensitive to the diverse views and beliefs that people hold and anticipates and prepares for others' reactions based on this understanding</li> <li>• Understands their own impact and uses a range of influencing skills and techniques to achieve the best outcomes</li> <li>• Identifies key decision makers or 'people of power' and builds positive relationships to influence and gain support</li> <li>• Uses chains of indirect influence to build relationships of trust in order to get things done</li> <li>• Uses influence rather than hierarchical position to build commitment from a variety of different stakeholders</li> <li>• Creates 'win-win' outcomes by developing relationships (both internal and external) which will provide mutual, long term benefit</li> <li>• Uses a wide variety of influencing skills to achieve the best results with all types of stakeholders</li> <li>• Able to influence the agendas of other organisations/teams</li> </ul>	
<b>Contra Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses positional power to build support</li> <li>• Fails to get support for ideas or projects</li> <li>• Does not build positive relationships with others</li> <li>• Believes that good ideas will sell themselves</li> <li>• Is not aware of own impact and creates disharmony</li> <li>• Does not tailor the delivery of proposals to the audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insensitive to different views and opinions</li> <li>• Listens to defend rather than to understand</li> <li>• Uses a 'one size fits all' approach to influencing and negotiating</li> <li>• Limited networks – internal and external</li> <li>• Circumvents the system to achieve own goals</li> </ul>

## Appendix O: Analysis and Decision-Making

Analysis and Decision Making	
<b>Definition:</b> Identifying the key issues, breaking down problems and establishing facts. Using sound judgement to make informed decisions which take into account financial/resource management and the local/wider economy and markets. Creating evidence based strategies and plans which take into account different options, benefits, risks and solutions to make effective decisions even in time critical situations.	
<b>Link to Strategy:</b> Being able to critically analyse and evaluate information in time pressured situations mitigates the decision making risk for the organisation. Making informed decisions based on evidence ensures that the decision aligns to the overall achievement of the corporate strategy. Clarity of thought is vital to ensuring the continued performance of the organisation.	
<b>Competency Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates accountability for decision making and reaches decisions in an unbiased way</li> <li>• Empowers team members to identify solutions to problems faced and make decisions where appropriate</li> <li>• Identifies patterns and trends in information and draws conclusions based on the evidence available</li> <li>• Recognises when more information is required to make a decision, critically analysing the data available</li> <li>• Identifies and analyses a range of options and assesses the short and long term impacts of the decision</li> <li>• Puts the needs of the organisation ahead of the needs of their own area to ensure that objective, sound decisions are made</li> <li>• Collaborates with key stakeholders to support or challenge the decisions made for their area</li> <li>• Makes timely logical decisions based on risk in a pragmatic way without excessive deliberation of the facts</li> <li>• Communicates clear direction to relevant parties on decisions made</li> <li>• Records decisions in a manner that is suitable for evidencing for all levels of governance</li> <li>• Takes corporate ownership for decisions which have wider implications outside of their area including external stakeholders and partners</li> <li>• Understands how the external market is changing and reflects this in their decision making</li> <li>• Conducts delivery of their work in an ethical manner</li> </ul>	
<b>Contra Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only uses information that supports their argument</li> <li>• Fails to take into account the wider perspective</li> <li>• Limited consideration given to the impacts of a decision</li> <li>• Makes decisions in isolation or is inconsistent in their decision making</li> <li>• Defers decisions to line managers that fall within their own remit</li> <li>• Deliberates for too long over decisions</li> <li>• Over consultative</li> <li>• Fails to take into account the strategic perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacks confidence in making decisions</li> <li>• Constantly changes direction based on challenge</li> <li>• Fails to critically analyse the information available</li> <li>• Relies too heavily on gut instinct</li> <li>• Does not use robust analysis to make informed decisions</li> <li>• Goes for the path of least resistance</li> <li>• Endlessly takes into account the strategic perspective at the cost of short term deliverables.</li> </ul>



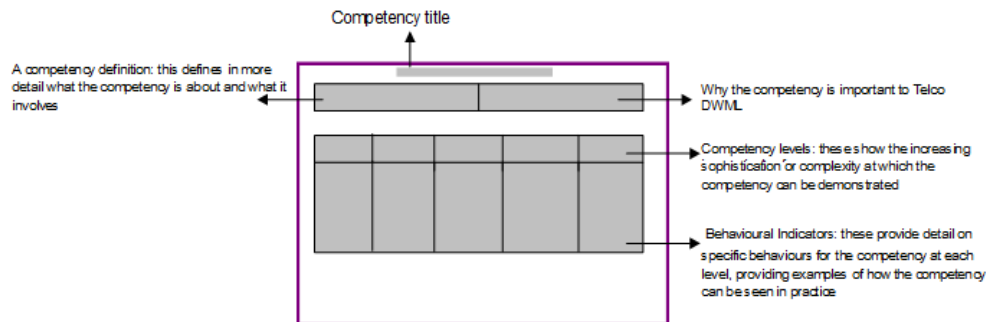
## Appendix P: Creativity and Innovation

Creativity & Innovation	
<b>Definition:</b> Standing back from the detail, taking a broader perspective and developing new ideas to take the organisation forward. Creating strategies and plans which take into account innovative, new approaches which are being trailed in other sectors and industries.	
<b>Link to Strategy:</b> Leaders will seek to develop strategies and plans for their area which break existing patterns of working when it improves the service. The ability to look across and outside of the organisation by taking a broader perspective will be key to ensuring functional boundaries do not create a barrier to success.	
<b>Competency Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages a culture of innovation by genuinely listening to ideas and allowing time to be creative</li> <li>Creates time and space for 'thinking' for self and team</li> <li>Thinks 'outside the box' even if this sometimes may go against popular opinion</li> <li>Identifies patterns and trends when looking at situations or data and uses the information to generate ideas/solutions</li> <li>Actively encourages ideas from staff using these ideas to inform their own thinking, developing proposals to take forward at a senior level</li> <li>Reviews working practices and comes up with ideas to improve the way the service is delivered</li> <li>Works with others and seeks the opinions of others to reach a creative solution</li> <li>Challenges the status quo and acts against the way things have traditionally been done to identify new ways of delivering service</li> <li>Allows for failure, fails fast and embeds any learning in the organisation</li> <li>Uses ideas that have improved business performance in other businesses/sectors and adapts them to suit the organisation</li> <li>Sees beyond the current business model to envisage new ways of delivering service</li> <li>Delivers pragmatic outcomes to achieve results</li> </ul>	
<b>Contra Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gets too involved in the detail</li> <li>Takes a short term view with no longer term focus</li> <li>Always applies the same concept/approach irrespective of the situation</li> <li>Risk averse and narrow approach</li> <li>Always re-inventing the wheel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Misses opportunities to use alternative delivery models</li> <li>Contributes to a culture of inaction</li> <li>Creates a punitive environment for risk taking</li> <li>Rigid in approach/resistant to new ideas</li> <li>Avoids considering different approaches</li> <li>Says 'we have always done it this way' – satisfied with the status quo</li> </ul>

## Appendix Q: Delivering Results

Delivering Results	
<b>Definition:</b> Being energetic and tenacious in the achievement of goals. Takes initiatives which often involve calculated risks and demonstrates the personal drive to do things better, more effectively, and in a way that exceeds goals and targets. It includes looking for new challenges and not being satisfied with the status quo but not making change for change's sake.	
<b>Link to Strategy:</b> A strategy is only as good as its implementation and delivery. Delivering results is about making things happen and driving performance.	
<b>Competency Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constantly displays a passion for delivering and striving to exceed</li> <li>Understands how their role leads on achieving corporate goals and objectives</li> <li>Organises their work and the work of their teams to ensure optimum delivery</li> <li>Actively agrees the responsibilities and accountabilities of all team members holding them to account for the delivery of work</li> <li>Consistently monitors performance of service and takes action to address any shortfalls</li> <li>Responds to pressures by prioritising and re-prioritising service deliverables supporting the decision if challenged</li> <li>Seeks feedback on a regular basis from others to measure progress of plans</li> <li>Takes ownership for achieving results against performance objectives/plans</li> <li>Leads on key projects ensuring that all project members are clear on their responsibilities and tasks</li> <li>Collaborates with others using resources efficiently to achieve the best results for the organisation</li> </ul>	
<b>Contra Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfied with mediocre achievement</li> <li>Gives in when faced with barriers or obstacles</li> <li>Focuses on non-value added measures of performance</li> <li>Fails to measure performance</li> <li>Fails to take action to address underperformance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of concern for improving performance</li> <li>Sets easily attainable objectives</li> <li>Makes change for changes sake</li> <li>Keeps going with a project that is clearly failing</li> </ul>


## Appendix R: Behavioural Competency Design and Format



Each core competency is described by a definition that indicates the general intent of the competency. Listed immediately below the definition are a number of key behaviours relevant to the competency. The behaviours are in no particular order of importance and they are not intended to represent all possible behaviours for each competency. They are, instead, intended as a guideline to the key behaviours that are desired of all Telco DWML staff for a given competency.

## Appendix S: Effective Communication

### Effective Communication

					
Definition			Why is this important to Telco DWML?		
Ability to effectively communicate; both verbally and in writing, with individuals and groups. Ensures there is an effective flow of information in terms of awareness and understanding. Is flexible and able to use varying styles and methods of communication.			Effective communication internally and externally is the ability to communicate with others in a manner that conveys the key messages and is appropriate to the audience. Effective communication will lead to a high quality and accessible service.		
<b>Level 1</b> Communicates information clearly and accurately both written and oral.	<b>Level 2</b> Communicates detailed information clearly, both written and oral.	<b>Level 3</b> Tailors communications to effectively reach an audience. Has the ability to influence and negotiate within requirements of role.	<b>Level 4</b> Communicates persuasively and confidently both to external and internal groups. Plays a representational role.	<b>Level 5</b> Able to effectively present to and facilitate influential groups either within Telco DWML or externally. Influences outcomes.	
Positive indicators:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Presents appropriate information in a clear and concise manner, both written and oral.</li><li>■ Checks own understanding and that of others.</li><li>■ Adjusts communication style to the situation or person.</li><li>■ Presents written information grammatically correct, and in a style appropriate to level of formality.</li><li>■ Communicates information in a friendly and approachable style.</li><li>■ Maintains accurate and up-to-date information.</li><li>■ Effectively contributes to divisional/departmental/team meetings.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Carefully prepares / organises written information for meetings and presentations.</li><li>■ Facilitates discussions with colleagues/others to achieve a common objective, contributes effectively to group discussion.</li><li>■ Able to influence within the scope of the role - Uses a range of methods to influence others, e.g. explain benefits and give background information.</li><li>■ Produces factual and concise written reports, minutes and correspondence of high quality.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Effectively explains / conveys key, and at times complex, information (technical, legal, regulatory, or procedural) to others, adapting content and style, as necessary and ensuring that this information is understood.</li><li>■ Takes others' perspectives into account when negotiating or presenting arguments</li><li>■ Anticipates reactions to messages and adapts communications accordingly.</li><li>■ Proactively shares information and resources across areas which support improvement.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Is a persuasive communicator.</li><li>■ Presents succinct, well balanced information written and oral, with clear outcomes.</li><li>■ Encourages a positive environment for constructive challenge and feedback.</li><li>■ Creates an environment where people are encouraged to communicate openly.</li><li>■ Shares relevant information concerning strategic / long term plans with colleagues/own team.</li><li>■ Develops proposals and reports in a style and language necessary to guide, inform, and/or persuade in line with Telco DWML protocol.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Develops strategic proposals and policies in a style and language necessary to guide, inform, and/or persuade.</li><li>■ Is capable of communicating to diverse audiences.</li><li>■ Effectively influences outcomes, sells the benefits of the position they are proposing, and negotiates to find solutions that the majority will accept.</li><li>■ Is aware of organisational politics when communicating.</li><li>■ Creates and implements appropriate communication strategies to support projects.</li></ul>	

## Appendix T: Team and Collaborative Working

## Team &amp; Collaborative Working

Definition			Why is this important to Telco DWML?		
Ability to work co-operatively within a group and across Telco DWML to achieve Telco DWML goals in a respectful manner. Fosters a collegiate environment. Understands and is tolerant of differing needs and viewpoints.			<b>Internally</b> – Employees work co-operatively together sharing best practice, breaking down departmental barriers and communicating fully and openly on new initiatives and priorities. <b>Externally</b> - The employees within the Telco DWML work in partnerships with other bodies to develop and deliver joint programmes, in the interest of increasing efficiency, improving quality, enhancing flexibility and meeting organisation needs.		
<b>Level 1</b> Works co-operatively and is a supportive member of the team/group.  Contributes positively to the achievement of team objectives.	<b>Level 2</b> Fosters a collaborative /teamworking spirit.  Actively helps and supports others to achieve team goals.	<b>Level 3</b> Builds teamwork, works collaboratively with team members and colleagues.	<b>Level 4</b> Establishes Teams and manages the team process.  Is aware of Telco DWML diversity and incorporates this into forming a team / team objectives.	<b>Level 5</b> Leads a cohesive team approach by promoting the importance of working both within and across departments and locations to achieve team and wider Telco DWML strategic objectives.	
<b>Positive Indicators:</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Respects and values differing viewpoints.</li><li>■ Willingly works towards team / shared goals.</li><li>■ Recognises that all teams do not operate in the same way, adapts their working style/method to achieve results.</li><li>■ Encourages other team members by recognising their individual contribution.</li><li>■ Actively takes part in team tasks in the workplace.</li><li>■ Co-operates with and supports others.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Contributes to core and wider teams / groups in a consistently proactive and co-operative manner.</li><li>■ Consistently displays positive approach to working with others.</li><li>■ Appreciates the differences between people and is flexible in accommodating others.</li><li>■ Where appropriate, passes constructive feedback to colleagues.</li><li>■ Works for solutions that the majority of team/colleagues can support.</li><li>■ Regularly volunteers and participates in activities.</li><li>■ Shares work out equitably and fairly</li><li>■ Enlists the active participation of everyone to ensure team goals are achieved within the context of the role.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Effectively delegates, monitors and motivates the team/working group</li><li>■ Sets a common aim/goal for the team.</li><li>■ Seeks ideas and input from colleagues in own and other teams to make best use of expertise and improve performance.</li><li>■ Creates a team environment through regular communication and involvement of staff in the activities of the department.</li><li>■ Shares knowledge, experience and expertise.</li><li>■ Acknowledges the contribution of others and ensures that the recognition for achievements is shared.</li><li>■ Works in partnership with colleagues and other departments to achieve common goals. Works to achieve consensus.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Willingly commits time and resources to team-based projects.</li><li>■ Creates an opportunity for everyone to fulfil their potential within the team.</li><li>■ Encourages team work across departments and locations.</li><li>■ Encourages team members to voice their opinions in a constructive way.</li><li>■ Works to break down barriers within and across area. Helps individuals understand how the wider organisation operates and how co-operation across the different departments is beneficial.</li><li>■ Brings together people with different styles/approaches and from diverse backgrounds to complement the team and enhance the outcome of the group.</li><li>■ Shares information across teams and encourages others to do so.</li><li>■ Monitors progress of teams against objectives.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Fosters Telco DWML's culture that values fairness, inclusiveness and diversity.</li><li>■ Develop strategies to improve cross functional/intra departmental teamworking.</li><li>■ Identifies opportunities for cross functional collaboration.</li><li>■ Brings collaborative groups together to achieve an objective and focuses group on delivery.</li><li>■ Instils a sense of pride in the work of the team and the organisation as a whole, by highlighting achievements.</li><li>■ Supports initiatives designed to increase and enhance the inclusion of individuals/groups from diverse backgrounds.</li><li>■ Challenges others whose behaviours/actions do not show an acceptance and appreciation of diversity.</li></ul>	

## Appendix U: Change, Adaptability and Flexibility

## Change, Adaptability &amp; Flexibility

Definition			Why is this important to Telco DWML?		
Flexible and comfortable adapting current work practices and procedures to respond to changing/different situations. To embrace change, take intelligent/measured risks, and support others to engage in the change process.			Within Telco DWML, this behaviour is about making changes that increase the effectiveness of our work. Externally, it is about increasing our sphere of influence and impact. Creates an environment that responds positively to change and encourages an understanding that everyone can make a difference.		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	
Understands the need for change, and is willing to adapt to it.	Recognises where changes can be made and takes steps to make those changes. Gains commitment from others to change.	Introduces and promotes the need for change and implements new approaches, to improve processes and services.	Involves and motivates others in finding improved ways of working. Manages specific change projects.	Leads change projects that have an important strategic impact on Telco DWML. Effectively plans for and manages their implementation.	
Positive indicators:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Is flexible and responsive to changing work priorities and issues.</li><li>■ Shows a willingness to try out new ways of working.</li><li>■ Promotes improvement ideas to more senior colleagues.</li><li>■ Adjusts own working style to fit different situations.</li><li>■ Willing changes work routines or patterns.</li><li>■ Is willing to use new technology.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Contributes positively to the change process and sees change as an opportunity to improve performance.</li><li>■ Works with division/department/ team members to identify change opportunities.</li><li>■ Identifies and makes changes to improve efficiency and quality of service of own area via input to procedures and processes.</li><li>■ Implements and shares ideas for continuous improvement within division/department/team.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Proactively shares information and resources relating to the change agenda.</li><li>■ Is aware of overall objectives of Telco DWML, when implementing new processes.</li><li>■ Understands and promotes the need for change.</li><li>■ Implements the agreed change initiatives.</li><li>■ Communicates changes to others in a clear and positive way.</li><li>■ Evaluates processes against best practices in order to make improvements</li><li>■ Balances current work priorities with change priorities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Supports others during change.</li><li>■ Creates an environment where change is 'the norm' and ways of working are consistently challenged.</li><li>■ Actively seeks out information in relation to changes which affect their division/department/team and puts plans in place to ensure implementation</li><li>■ Communicates the need and rationale for change – explains the 'why' and the 'what'.</li><li>■ Helps people to develop a clear understanding of what they will need to do differently, as a result of changes.</li><li>■ Manages the agreed change implementation process/initiative.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Act as a role model for change by demonstrating a commitment to the change process. Communicates a clear, compelling vision of what the change will accomplish.</li><li>■ Encourages others to incorporate continuous improvement as a way of approaching work.</li><li>■ Collaborates with key stakeholders to promote major change initiatives.</li><li>■ Obtains and provides resources to enable implementation of change initiatives.</li><li>■ Helps others deal with their reactions to change.</li><li>■ Recognises and acknowledges staff for their contributions during the change process.</li></ul>	

## Appendix V: Focus Group Discussion Questions

**Questions for Focus Group Discussions to guide sessions with key stakeholders over 3, two-hour sessions.**

Question 1 What strategies were used to roll out change in the past?

Question 2 Should the strategies used in the past be altered for the upcoming change?

Question 3 What change tools, techniques and methodologies were followed?

Question 4 How were they applied?

Question 5 In the past and since the previous change, how is employee performance monitored?

Question 6 What have been the impacts on current processes and employee roles after the change?

Question 7 How was this communicated? What was the communication management strategy?

Question 8 How do you feel about feedback mechanisms and employee participation during organisation change?

Question 9 How were employee reactions towards future change managed?

Question 10 If you could, what would you do differently for future change efforts?

## Appendix W: Actionable Recommendations and Actions Taken to Improve Strategic Change Implementation at Telco DWML

Findings / Recommendations and Actions	Leadership Function		Leadership Behaviour and Action	
	Leadership of Middle Management	Collective Leadership	Change Strategy	Workforce Trust
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Middle Management to improve leadership of changes. Achieved through interpretation of changes and facilitate team members change acceptance. Responsibility surrounding upward and downward communication.</li> <li>Performance monitoring of non-supervisory staff and middle-managers in changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a collective leadership structure that reflects and integrates clearly defined roles and responsibilities of managers in Telco DWML change, and improves communication and collaboration in the management team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a change strategy in a participatory manner that translates the vision into action and practice providing a rationale for changes and serves as a guide for the implementation of changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management to improve the environment through demonstration and actions to improve trust.</li> </ul>
<b>Areas of Focus and Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Management to acknowledge Middle Managements' additional management and leadership functions associated to changes</li> <li>Develop an accountability framework for additional functions</li> <li>Empowerment of Middle-Management and provide necessary support to perform additional functions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role modelling from senior managers and peer-to-peer support.</li> <li>Additional Resources.</li> <li>Delegation of Authority.</li> <li>Leadership coaching and Development Training</li> <li>Incentives</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define clearly the roles and responsibilities of managers in the structure in the context of change management. (Visionary, Strategic, Facilitative Leadership).</li> <li>Improve communication among managers</li> <li>Improve collaboration among managers</li> <li>Improve collective decision-making among managers</li> <li>Conduct leadership team performance coaching, part of the broader leadership development and coaching agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify external and internal expertise to design the future change strategy in Telco DWML</li> <li>Staff engagement and consultation during preparation</li> <li>Communicate the strategy to the wider Telco DWML audience</li> <li>Treat the change strategy document as a 'Living Organism'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciate staff perception of management, re-evaluate management actions, rethink management practices, and understand how management decisions effect attitudes and behaviour of staff</li> <li>Ensure consistent and effective communication</li> <li>Management to role model the behaviours they expect</li> <li>Improve collaboration and engagement with staff</li> </ul>
<b>Actions Taken Based on Findings and Meetings with Senior Management and Senior Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Middle Management integrated into wider management structure, providing visibility of ongoing projects.</li> <li>Resource allocation for future changes</li> <li>Middle-Management recognised as a link between Senior Management and Team Members</li> <li>Development of leadership development and coaching programme</li> <li>Cost-benefit analysis conducted to consider how a digital performance monitoring system can be implemented as part of the broader Transformation and Transition programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder Analysis completed to decipher who will be part of the collective leadership structure.</li> <li>As part of the broader leadership development and coaching exercise, Leadership and Behavioural competencies on how to 'Lead and Manage Change' were developed and tested on two middle-managers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both external and internal parties are identified to define the type of change strategy for future Telco DWML changes</li> <li>Engage / Consultation - Weekly meetings set-up that include external and internal parties and include management and non-supervisory staff to guide and monitor the preparation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First three points will be facilitated through the development of the collective leadership structure team and associated coaching recommendation that will be conducted by the Learning and Development team (part of the CMO)</li> <li>Last point facilitated through the joint development of the change strategy and collective leadership structure</li> </ul>